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# *The natural history of Selborne*

Gilbert White, William Jardine, Edward Jesse, William Jardine Bart

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Samuel Henshaw

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THE

# NATURAL HISTORY

OF

# SELBORNE;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON VARIOUS PARTS OF NATURE;

AND

THE NATURALISTS CALENDAR.

BY THE LATE

REV. GILBERT WHITE, A.M.

Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

WITH ADDITIONS AND SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES BY

SIR WILLIAM JARDINE, BART. F.R.S.E., F.L.S., M.W.S.

EDITED, WITH FURTHER ILLUSTRATIONS, A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR, AND A COMPLETE INDEX, BY

EDWARD JESSE, ESQ.

Author of "Gleanings in Natural History," &c. &c.

WITH FORTY ENGRAVINGS.

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ERRATUM.

Page 18, bottom line, for *bark* read *whole*.

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A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

OF

# THE REV. GILBERT WHITE.

It is impossible for any one to read that charming book, "The Natural History of Selbourne," or Selborne, as it is now generally spelt, without wishing to know something of its author, the Rev. Gilbert White. We regret, however, that from his secluded habits in his favourite village, and the monotony of his life, little is known of him. That little we will now lay before our readers, which we are the better enabled to do from having had in our possession for some years the Diaries of Mr. White, which he kept with great care and neatness. From these Diaries, a pretty correct idea may be formed of Mr. White's habits of life. It is evident that he was strongly attached to the charms of rural life, and the tranquillity afforded by his favourite village, where "he spent the greater part of his time in literary occupations, and especially in the study of nature."

Gilbert White was born at Selborne, at the house where he afterwards lived and died, on the 18th of July, 1720. This house was then the residence of his grandmother, his

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father residing at Compton, in Surrey. Gilbert White's father was the grandson of Sir Sampson White (knighted by Charles the Second, on his coronation), to whose memory a handsome monument is placed in St. Mary's Church, Oxford.

In the year 1731, his father came to Selborne to reside, when Gilbert White was eleven years of age. His father, John White, was the only son of Gilbert White, vicar of Selborne, and married Anne, only child of the Rev. Thomas Holt, rector of Streatham, in Surrey. Mr. John White was a barrister of the Middle Temple, but did not practise after his marriage. Gilbert, and three of his brothers, Thomas, John, and Henry, all much interested in the study of Natural History, were probably indebted to their father for their early lessons in their favourite pursuits. The brick-path at the back of the house, in the paddock, at Selborne, was laid down by him upwards of a century since, that in his old age he might be able to walk into his field in the early morning without wetting his feet. It remains to this day; the bricks having been double-burned especially for this purpose. He desired in his will that no monument should be erected to him, "not desiring to have his name recorded, save in the book of life."

Every thing relating to the family of Gilbert White must be interesting. His father was born in 1688, and died in 1759. And of his brothers, one of them, Thomas, was a Fellow of the Royal Society. To him, Gilbert was indebted for very many suggestions for his work; and to his influence the public owe whatever pleasure they may have derived from its perusal, as it was only with much persuasion that the philosopher of Selborne could be induced to pass through the ordeal of criticism, having a great dread of reviewers.

This dread was in some degree removed by his brother

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Thomas undertaking to give a review of his work in the "Gentleman's Magazine," in which periodical it appeared in the year 1789. The following extract from it may interest our readers:—

"Contemplative persons see with regret the country more and more deserted every day, as they know that every well-regulated family of property, which quits a village to reside in a town, injures the place that is forsaken in many material circumstances. It is with pleasure, therefore, we observe, that so rational an employment of leisure time as the study of nature, promises to become popular; since whatever adds to the number of rural amusements, and consequently counteracts the allurements of the metropolis, is, on this consideration, of national importance.

"Most of the local histories which have fallen into our hands have been taken up with descriptions of the vestiges of ancient art and industry, while natural observations have been too much neglected. But we agree with Mr. White in his idea of parochial history, which, he thinks, ought to consist of natural productions and occurrences, as well as antiquities: for antiquities, when once surveyed, seldom recal further attention, and are confined to one spot; whereas the pleasures of the naturalist continue through the year, return with unabated attractions every spring, and may be extended over the kingdom.

"Mr. White is the gentleman who some years ago favoured the world with a monography of the British Hirundines, published in the Philosophical Transactions, which we reviewed in a former volume. It is now reprinted, and the same sagacity of observation runs through the work before us.

* * * *

"The sliding down of a hill into a valley, in the neighbour-

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hood of Selborne, gives the writer an opportunity of applying the succeeding apt passage from 'The Cyder' of John Philips :—

> . . . Who knows but that once more . . .
> This mount may journey, and, his present site
> Forsaken, to thy neighbour's bounds transfer
> Thy goodly plants, affording matter strange
> For law debates?

"Whether the poet alludes to any actual suit commenced in consequence of such an event, we are ignorant; but this quotation reminds us of a real litigation in Syria, between the owner of a hill and the possessor of some land in the adjoining dale, which was overwhelmed by its lapse. The Emir Yousef, before whom the cause was brought, finding the travelling of mountains, we suppose, to be a *casus omissus* in the Koran (the civil as well as religious code of the Mahometans), decided in a manner satisfactory to all parties, by generously making good the losses of both plaintiff and defendant.—*Volney's Travels*, chap. 20.

"Letter 53 contains a curious account of the Coccus vitis vinifera, an insect very pernicious to vines in southern climates. The vine, having no plants indigenous to England of the same genus, remains here free from the ravages of insects, except in this instance; though our other kinds of wall-fruit, which have been introduced from warmer climates are annoyed with the insects of the congenerous native plants. This writer is, we believe, the first who has described it scientifically as found in this country. But we apprehend that enthusiastic gardener, Sir William Temple, a century ago, complains of this nuisance as infesting his exotics. —*Works*, vol. 3, p. 209, 8vo, 1757.

"If this author should be thought by any to have been too minute in his researches, be it remembered that his studies have been in the great book of nature. It must be

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confessed, that the economy of the several kinds of crickets, and the distinction between the stock-dove and the ring-dove, are humble pursuits, and will be esteemed trivial by many; perhaps by some to be objects of ridicule. However, before we condemn any pursuits which contribute so much to health by calling us abroad, let us consider how the studious have employed themselves in their closets. In a former century, the minds of the learned were engaged in determining whether the name of the Roman poet should be spelt Vergilius or Virgilius; and the number of letters in the name of Shakespear still remains a matter of much solicitude and criticism. Nor can we but think that the conjectures about the migration of Hirundines are fully as interesting as the Chattertonian controversy.

"We could have wished that this gentleman had uniformly, as he has frequently, used the Linnæan names. No naturalist can now converse intelligibly in any other language than that of the celebrated Swede. And impartiality compels us to say, that we are disappointed in not finding a particular account of the tillage of the district where Selborne is situate. A person with this writer's patient observation would have made many remarks highly valuable. Men of intelligence, like him, are wanted to promote an intimacy between the library and the plough. The man of books sees many errors which he supposes he could correct; while the practical cultivator laughs at the essays of the theorist. Much the greater part of renting farmers are prevented, by their anxiety to wind the bottom round the year, from engaging in experiments; and many think it nearly criminal to deviate from the practice of their forefathers; so that, at this day, it remains for gentlemen of property and enlarged minds to determine whether it is best to sow three bushels of wheat, or one, on an acre of land. In other words, whether there be not as much corn yearly wasted by superfluous, perhaps

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injurious, seeding, as would furnish an annual and ample supply for the largest city. Though agriculture has of late been attended to, still he would be one of the greatest benefactors to his countrymen in general, who would convince them that the richest mine of national wealth lies within six inches of the surface, and who would teach them the most advantageous method of working it.

"On the whole, we will pronounce that the inquirers into natural knowledge will find Mr. White to be no unequal successor of Ray and Derham; and that the History of the Priory is a curious tract of local antiquity. We should not hesitate to speak so favourably of this work even though it had much less rural anecdote and literary allusion to recommend it."

Having given this short account of a part of Gilbert White's family, we will proceed to an account of the Naturalist himself.

He received his education at Basingstoke, under the Rev. Thomas Warton, vicar of that town, and the father of those two distinguished literary characters, Dr. Joseph Warton, Master of Winchester School, and Mr. Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He was admitted at Oriel College in December, 1739, and took his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1743. In March, 1744, he was elected Fellow of his College. He became Master of Arts in October, 1746, and served the office of Proctor, which he did to the great surprise of his family, as they thought it would not suit his habits; but he is said to have performed his duties ably. It is probable, however, that he was more observant of the swallows in the Christchurch meadows, than of the under-graduates in High-street. He had frequent opportunities of accepting College livings, but his fondness for his native village—his love of the country and its pursuits, and especially that of Natural History—made him decline all

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preferment. There can be no doubt that the "shades of old Selborne, so lovely and sweet," were peculiarly well adapted for the observations of a lover of nature; and here Mr. White passed his days either in correspondence with, or in the society of, amiable friends, and closed them in the 73rd year of his age, on the 26th of June, 1793.

Mr. White in his earlier days was much attached to Miss Mulso (afterwards Mrs. Chapone), whose brother was his most intimate friend, and between them a most interesting and amusing series of letters took place. These letters would have been well worth publishing, and it was intended that this should be done; but when Mr. Mulso's son was applied to for Mr. White's correspondence, the mortifying answer was returned that they had all been destroyed. Mr. Mulso's letters, we understand, are still remaining.

It should be mentioned, on the authority of one of his nephews, and it may well be imagined, that Gilbert White's habits were very temperate, and his temper cheerful and social. He was often surrounded by his nephews and nieces, and visited by the respectable gentry of his neighbourhood. His pleasing manners were duly appreciated by them all. As long as his health allowed him, he always attended the annual election of Fellows at Oriel College, where the gentlemen commoners were allowed the use of the common-room after dinner. This liberty they seldom availed themselves of, except on the occasion of Mr. White's visits; for such was his happy, and, indeed, inimitable manner of relating an anecdote and telling a story, that the room was always filled when he was there. Not very long after the publication of his "Selborne," Dr. Scrope Beardmore, the then Warden of Merton College, made the following striking observation to a nephew of Mr. White's, from whom the Editor received the anecdote, and which has proved singularly prophetic:—

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"Your uncle," the Warden said, "has sent into the world a publication with nothing to call attention to it but an advertisement or two in the newspapers; but depend upon it the time will come when very few who buy books will be without it."

It was to Miss Mulso that Mr. White addressed the following suppositious letter from Timothy, his old tortoise, which may amuse some of his admirers:—

MOST RESPECTED LADY,

YOUR letter gave me great satisfaction, being the first that I was ever honoured with. It is my wish to answer you in your own way; but I could never make a verse in my life, so you must be content with plain prose.

Having seen but little of this great world, conversed but little, read less, I feel myself much at a loss how to entertain so intelligent a correspondent. Unless you will let me write about myself, my answer will be very short. Know, then, that I am an American, and was born in the year 1734, in the province of Virginia, in the midst of a savannah that lay between a large tobacco plantation and a creek of the sea. Here I spent my youthful days among my relations, with much satisfaction, and saw around me many venerable kinsmen, who attained to great ages without any interruption from distempers. Longevity is so general among our species, that a funeral is quite a rare occurrence. I can just remember the death of my great great grandfather, who departed this life in the 160th year of his age. Happy should I have been in the enjoyment of my native climate, and the society of my friends, had not a sea-boy, who was wandering about to see what he could pick up, surprised me as I was sunning myself under a bank, and whipping me into his wallet, carried me aboard his ship. The circumstances of our voyage were not worthy of recital. I only remember the rippling of the water against the sides of the vessel as we sailed along, was a very lulling and composing sound, which served to sooth my slumbers as I lay in the hold. We had a short

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voyage, and came to anchor on the coast of England, in the harbour of Chichester. In that city my kidnapper sold me for half-a-crown to a country gentleman, who came up to attend an election. I was immediately packed in a basket, and carried, slung by the servant's side, to their place of abode. As we rode very hard for forty miles, and as I had never been on horseback before, I found myself somewhat giddy with my airy jaunt.

My purchaser, who was a good-humoured man, after showing me to some of his neighbours, and giving me the name of Timothy, took little further notice of me, so I fell under the care of his lady, a benevolent woman, whose humane attention extended to the meanest of her retainers. With this gentlewoman I remained almost forty years, living in a little walled-in court, in the front of her house, and enjoying much quiet, and as much satisfaction as I could expect without society, which I often languished after. At last the good old lady died, at a very advanced age, such as even a tortoise would call a great age, and I then became the property of her nephew.

This man, my present master, dug me out of my winter retreat, and packing me in a deal box, jumbled me eighty miles to my present abode. I was sorely shaken by this expedition, which was the worst journey I ever experienced. In my present situation I enjoy many advantages, such as the range of an extensive garden, affording a variety of sun and shade, and abounding in lettuces, poppies, kidney-beans, and many other salubrious and delectable herbs and plants, and especially with a good choice of delicate gooseberries! But still at times I miss my good old mistress, whose grave and regular deportment suited best with my disposition; for you must know that my present master is what men call a naturalist, and much visited by people of that turn, who often put him on whimsical experiments, such as feeling my pulse, putting me into a tub of water to try if I can swim, &c.; and twice a year I am carried to the grocer's to be weighed, that it may be seen how much I am wasted during the months of my abstinence, and how much I gain by feeding during the summer. Upon these occasions, I am placed on my back in the scale, where I sprawl about, to the great diversion of the

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shopkeeper's children. These matters displease me; but there is another that hurts my pride,—I mean the contempt shown for my understanding, which these "lords of the creation" are very apt to discover, thinking that nobody knows anything but themselves. I heard my master say that he expected I should some day tumble down the ha-ha; whereas I would have him to know that I can discover a precipice from the plain ground as well as himself. Sometimes my master repeats with much seeming triumph the following lines, which occasion a loud laugh:—

> "Timotheus, placed on high
> Amid the tuneful quire,
> With flying fingers touch'd the lyre."

For my part, I see no wit in the application, nor know whence the verses are quoted; perhaps from some prophet of his own, who if he penned them for the sake of ridiculing tortoises, bestowed his pains, I think, to poor purposes. These are some of my grievances; but they sit very light on me, in comparison of what remains behind.

Know then, tender-hearted lady, that my great misfortune, and what I have never divulged to any one before, is the want of society with my own kind. This reflection is always uppermost in my mind, but comes upon me with irresistible force every spring. It was in the month of May last that I resolved to elope from my place of confinement; for my fancy had represented to me that probably many agreeable tortoises, of both sexes, might inhabit the heights of Baker's Hill, or the extensive plains of the neighbouring meadow, both of which I could discern from the terrace. One sunny morning I watched my opportunity, found the wicket open, eluded the vigilance of the gardener, and escaped into the sainfoin, which begun to be in bloom, and thence into the beans. I was missing eight days, wandering in this wilderness of sweets, and exploring the meadow at times. But my pains were all to no purpose; I could find no society such as I sought for. I began to grow hungry, and to wish myself at home. I therefore came forth in sight, and surrendered myself up to Thomas, who had been inconsolable in my absence.

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Thus, Madam, have I given you a faithful account of my satisfactions and sorrows, the latter of which are mostly uppermost. You are a lady, I understand, of much sensibility; let me therefore make my case your own in the following manner, and then you will judge of my feelings: suppose you were to be kidnapped away to-morrow in the bloom of your life to a land of tortoises, and were never to see again a human face for fifty years!!! Think on this, dear lady, and pity,

Your sorrowful Reptile,

TIMOTHY.

This much is known of Mr. White. Further particulars of him must be sought in his Diaries, his History of Selborne, and in his Correspondence. He was, strictly speaking, an out-door naturalist, following the pursuit with unwearied diligence, and enjoying the charms of rural scenery with unbounded admiration.

"Me far above the rest, Selbornian scenes,
The pendant forests, and the mountain greens,
Strike with delight: there spreads the distant view,
That gradual fades till sunk in misty blue;
Here nature hangs her slopy woods to sight;
Rills hurl between and dart a quivering light."

MR. WHITE.

His Diaries were kept with unremitting diligence; and in his annual migrations to Oriel College, and other places, his man Thomas, who seems to have been well qualified for the office, recorded the weather journal. The state of the thermometer, barometer, and the variations of the wind are noted, as well as the quantity of rain which fell. We have daily accounts of the weather, whether hot or cold, sunny or cloudy: we have, also information of the first tree in leaf, and even of the appearance of the first fungi, and of the plants first in blossom. We are told when mosses vegetate, and when

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insects first appear and disappear. There are also remarks with regard to fish and other animals; with miscellaneous observations and memoranda on various subjects. For instance, we are told that on the 21st of June, house-martins, which had laid their eggs in an old nest, had hatched them, and that when this is the case they get the start of those that build new ones by ten days or a fortnight. He speaks with some degree of triumph to having ricked his meadow hay in *delicate* order, and that Thomas had seen a pole-cat run across his garden. He records the circumstance of boys playing at *taw* on the Plestor; and that he had set *Gunnery*, one of his bantam hens, on nine of her own eggs. He complains that dogs come into his garden at night and eat his gooseberries, and gives a useful hint to farmers and others, when he says that rooks and crows destroy an immense number of chaffers, and that were it not for these birds the chaffers would destroy everything.

In addition to his remarks on Natural History, Mr. White recorded in his diaries the visits which were occasionally paid him, and carefully notes down the births of his numerous nephews and nieces, (amounting to about sixty-three at the time his diary closed,) as they respectively came into the world. He "chronicled" his ale and beer, as they were brewed by his man Thomas, who appears to have been his valet, gardener, and assistant naturalist. He takes notice of the quantity of port wine which came to his share when he divided a pipe of it with some of his neighbours; and he makes frequent mention of his crops, his fine and early cucumbers, and the flavour of his Cardilliac peas,—he evidently passing much of his time in his garden. The appearance of his neighbours' hops, the beginning and ending of their harvests, their bees, pigs, and poultry, are also noticed in succession, and appear to have added to the interest he took in rural life.

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Insignificant as these little details may appear, they were not thought to be so by a man whose mind was evidently stored with considerable learning, who possessed a cultivated and elegant taste for what is beautiful in nature, and who has left behind him one of the most delightful works in the English language,—a work which will be read as long as that language lasts, and which is equally remarkable for its extreme accuracy, its pleasing style, and the agreeable and varied information it contains.

In order to enable our readers to enter more fully into the merits of the "Natural History of Selborne," some account of that village, its neighbourhood, and of Mr. White's residence, is now given.

Selborne is situated in the extreme eastern corner of Hampshire, bordering on Sussex. It is about fifty miles from London, and between the towns of Alton and Petersfield. It is evident (whatever may be the case at present) that in Mr. White's time the village was not readily approached by carriages. The charming deep sandy lanes in that part of Hampshire and Sussex, overgrown as they are with stunted oaks, hazels, hawthorns, and dog-roses, and the banks covered with wild strawberries, primroses, and pretty ferns, would in winter be filled with mud, to say nothing of the cart-ruts. I find amongst Mr. White's papers the following pleasing lines, addressed to one of his nieces, Mrs. J. White, by her father, and signed G. T., and which will give some idea of the roads of Selborne :—

"From henceforth, my dear M——, I 'll no longer complain
Of your ruts and your rocks, of your roads and your rain;
Here 's a proverb that suits with your cottage most pat,
'When a thing 's of most worth, 'tis most hard to get at.'

And besides, where to find such another retreat
As the shades of old Selborne, so lonely and sweet,
Where the lover so freely may languish and sigh,
Where the student may read, and the Christian may die?



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But as now neither lover nor student am I,
(I 'm a Christian, I hope, but I wish not to die,)
So nor books, nor a mistress, nor zeal have inspired
My muse to commend what she ne'er has admired.

Yet as mind gives a comfort to deserts and dens,
Makes a turnpike of bogs, and a garden of glens;
So affection, kind chemist! I feel, can convert
To the sweetest of sweets what I thought to be dirt.

Be then welcome, dear Selborne, as welcome can be,
As the primrose of May, or the hawthorn to me;
For 'tis there (may they ever be blest from above!)
Dwell a daughter and son, and the children I love." *

As Selborne is approached from Alton, the beauty of its valley is seen as it bursts suddenly into view, and affords a prospect of great rural beauty. A foot-bridge is thrown across a deep ravine of rocky bank, at the bottom of which a little streamlet runs over a road, which is at once its channel and the carriage-way to the village. From this spot the precipitous beechen hangers may be seen, so often referred to by Mr. White; the white tower of the village church; the snug parsonage, and the pretty cottages, sprinkled over the landscape.

Farm-houses, with their barns and straw-yards, hop-lands, and corn-fields, and what is seldom seen in these degenerate days, a may-pole, add to the beauty of the scenery.

And here I may be allowed to quote a passage or two from an article which appeared some years ago in the New Monthly Magazine, on the village of Selborne, written by one who appears to have visited it out of pure love for the memory of Mr. White, and from the pleasure he had derived from his writings.

"The traveller who would 'view fair Selborne aright,' should humour the caprices of our fickle climate, and visit

* [These lines were written by Mr. Gabriel Tahourdin.]

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it only when its fields and foliage are clothed in their summer verdure, or autumnal russet, and lighted up in genial sunshine; for its beauty is of the joyous seasons, fitted neither to be observed by the sullen influence of a rainy day, nor torn by the rude hand of winter. Descending into 'the single straggling street' of which the village consists, my steps were instinctively directed towards the hanger, and I soon found myself climbing the winding path which was cut through the beech-wood in the time of Gilbert White. A sweeter spot than the interior of this thick covert, with its craggy slopes, and 'graceful pendulous foliage,' it is impossible to conceive. The effect on entering its cool shades, and deep twilight gloom, after the full blaze of the glowing sunshine, was most refreshing, and stole over the senses with a peculiar delight. The stillness which reigned around was here only broken by the hum of insects, and the tinkling of the bells from a herd of cattle, which, the woodland being part of the village common ground, were turned in to graze. The charm of the scene was much increased by this rural music, borne through the glades in the hanger.

"Mr. White's own house, the successive abode of several generations of his family, is, of course, the first object of the traveller's inquiry. It stands not very far from the church, and is an irregular, unpretending edifice, which has evidently been enlarged at different periods, with more care of interior comfort than of architectural symmetry. Aided by the old-fashioned neatness of its lawns and gravel walks, the house preserves the staid aspect of bygone days, and has apparently undergone no alteration since the death of the naturalist. It was impossible to gaze on the spot without recalling to memory those hundred little passages in his book which, with so pleasing and beautiful an association, have identified the intellectual pursuits of the man, with the tasteful purity of his mind, with the every beauty of his

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beloved retreat. The swallows, his favourite object of notice among the 'winged people,' were at the moment careering in circles round the house, and twittering among its eaves. In looking over the garden-fence, I thought of its quondam tenant, and his old familiar friends, his tortoise, whose habits he has so quaintly described; and at last the form of the venerable naturalist himself almost rose up in fancy before me. In the churchyard is an ancient yew, which I do not remember that White has noticed, and measuring full sixteen feet in girth."

And here we may set this tasteful traveller right. Although no mention is made of this tree in the Natural History, it occurs in the fifth letter of the "Antiquities of Selborne," where White says that in the churchyard of the village is a yew-tree whose aspect bespeaks it to be of a great age. It seems to have seen several centuries, and is probably coeval with the church, and therefore may be deemed an antiquity. The body is short, squat, and thick, and measures twenty-three feet in the girth, supporting a head of suitable extent to its bulk. This is a male tree, which in the spring sheds clouds of dust, and fills the atmosphere around with farina. We may mention, while speaking of the Selborne churchyard, that on the fifth grave from the north wall of the chancel, the following inscription may be seen on a head-stone:—

G. W.

26 June,

1793.

There is "a slight heave of the turf," and this marks the humble grave of the naturalist and philosopher. In the church there is the following inscription on a monument:—

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IN THE FIFTH GRAVE FROM THIS WALL ARE BURIED THE REMAINS OF

THE REV. GILBERT WHITE, M. A.,

FIFTY YEARS FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, IN OXFORD,

AND HISTORIAN OF THIS HIS NATIVE PARISH.

HE WAS ELDEST SON OF JOHN WHITE, ESQUIRE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW,

AND ANNE, HIS WIFE, ONLY CHILD OF

THOMAS HOLT, RECTOR OF STREATHAM, IN SURREY,

WHICH SAID JOHN WHITE WAS THE ONLY SON OF GILBERT WHITE,

FORMERLY VICAR OF THIS PARISH.

HE WAS KIND AND BENEFICENT TO HIS RELATIONS,

BENEVOLENT TO THE POOR,

AND DESERVEDLY RESPECTED BY ALL HIS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS.

HE WAS BORN JULY 18TH, 1720, O. S.,

AND DIED JUNE 26TH, 1793.

NEC BONO QUICQUAM MALI EVENIRE POTEST,

NEC VIVO, NEC MORTUO.

Few personal reminiscences of Gilbert White are now to be collected at Selborne. The writer we have quoted states, that "all an old dame, who had nursed several of the family, could tell him of a philosophical old bachelor, was that he was a still, quiet body," and that "there wasn't a bit of harm in him, I 'll assure you, sir,—there wasn't, indeed." Alas! for all the dignity of science, and all the honour that befalleth "a prophet in his own country."

Mr. White died, as we have already said, at the advanced age of seventy-three, having passed his life with scarcely any other vicissitudes than those of the seasons. The following letter, with which the editor has been favoured by one of Mr. White's family, will show his style of correspondence,—it was addressed to his brother Thomas.

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DEAR BROTHER,

As I have often heard Sir S. Stuart say, that if he had his timber to sell over again he could sell it for 500*l.* or 600*l.* more than he made of it: and as men seldom have much timber to sell a second time, you should, I think, retain Mr. Hounsom as your counsel, and make use of his superior judgment before you bargain. I hope you will find 4,000*l.* worth of trees that are ripe on your estate, and that sum will help much towards your younger children's fortunes.

As the blotted will is in the testator's own handwriting, I fear that circumstance will go much against us. Our uncle, Francis White, of Baliol Coll., left three imperfect wills in his own handwriting, much interlined with a pencil, and in strange confusion and obscurity; but as the parties chiefly concerned were Alderman White and our Grandfather of the Vicarage, they were so wise and moderate as to let law alone, and to settle matters by reference: so the lawyers were bit.

By all means, when you are more settled, begin laying in a fund of materials for the Nat. Hist. and Antiquities of this county. You are now at a time of life when judgment is mature, and when you have not lost that activity of body necessary for such pursuits. You must afford us good engravings to your work, and carry about an artist to the remarkable places. In many respects you will easily beat Plot: he is too credulous sometimes trifling, and sometimes superstitious; and at all times ready to make a needless display and ostentation of erudition. Your knowledge of physic, chemistry, anatomy, and botany, will greatly avail you. The sameness of soil in this county will prove to your disadvantage; while the variety of stuff is prodigious; coal, lead, copper, salt, marble, alabaster, fuller's earth, potters' clay, pipe-clay, iron, marl, &c. while we in general have nought but chalk. But then you must get Benj. to write abroad for the treatise De cretâ, and make the most of it, as it is so little known. Bp. Tanner will be of vast use for the religious houses. It is to be lamented that Plot was prevented by death from going on, for he improves vastly in his second Hist., which greatly exceeds his "Oxfordshir." We have, you know, an actual Survey

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of Hants, which you must get reduced so as to fold into a folio. You should study heraldry, and give the coats of arms of our nobility and gentry: till lately I was not aware how necessary that study is to an antiquarian: it is soon learnt, I think. There are in this county 253 parishes, most of which you should see. The Isle of Wight must also come into your plan.

Time has not yet permitted me to go through half Priestley's Electrical Hist.; but in vol. i. p. 86, I remark that Dr. Desaguliers proposed the following conjecture concerning the rise of vapours:—"The air at the surface of water being electrical, particles of water, he thought, jumped to it; then becoming themselves electrical, they repelled both the air and one another, and consequently ascended into the higher regions of the atmosphere." If this be always the case, what becomes of our supposition, which is, that by contact and condensation, the water in vapour is drawn *from* the *air* to the *water*, and that thus upland ponds are mostly supplied?

Yours, affect.,

GIL. WHITE.

I never saw an electrometer. Our neighbourhood is all bad with colds; and among the rest myself also: some have eruptive fevers.

It is hoped that this short sketch of an observant out-door naturalist, and true lover of nature, will not be found uninteresting. There is something so pleasing in tracing Mr. White's pursuits, in contemplating his kind and amiable disposition, and in viewing his benevolent and christian character, that we cannot but turn to the perusal of his charming work with increased pleasure and delight when the writer of it is more clearly placed before us. The editing of it has been a labour of love and pleasure to the present writer. Although a very humble follower and disciple of Gilbert White, he attributes his own pursuits, as an out-door naturalist, entirely to his example; and with him can truly declare, that they have, under Providence, by

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keeping the body and mind employed, contributed to much health and cheerfulness of spirits; and, what still adds to his happiness, have led him to the knowledge of a circle of friends, whose intelligent communications will ever be considered a matter of singular satisfaction and improvement.

I am indebted to one of my daughters for the following short poetical summary of the Rev. Gilbert White's amiable character:—

He lived in solitude—'midst trees and flowers,
Life's sunshine mingling with its passing showers;
No storms to startle, and few clouds to shade,
The even path his christian virtues made.
Yet not alone he lived! Soft voices near,
With whisper'd sweetness, soothed the good man's ear;
He heard them murmuring through the distant trees,
While, softly wafted on the summer breeze,
The hum of insects and the song of birds
Spoke to his heart in tones more sweet than words.

Him in those quiet shades the poor might bless,
Though few intruded on his loneliness;
He fed the hungry, pitied the distress'd,
And smooth'd their path to everlasting rest.
Thus hearing Nature speak in every sound,
Goodness and love in all her works he found,
Sermons in stones and in the running brooks;
Wisdom far wiser than in printed books,
And in the silence of his calm abode
In nature's works he worshipp'd nature's God!

MATILDA HOUSTOUN.

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D. HODGKINSON

# POEMS,

SELECTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE

REV. GILBERT WHITE.

D. HODGKINSON



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# INVITATION TO SELBORNE.

—•—

See, Selborne spreads her boldest beauties round
The varied valley, and the mountain ground,
Wildly majestic! What is all the pride
Of flats, with loads of ornaments supplied?—
Unpleasing, tasteless, impotent expense,
Compared with Nature's rude magnificence.
Arise, my stranger, to these wild scenes haste;
The unfinish'd farm awaits your forming taste:
Plan the pavilion, airy, light, and true;
Through the high arch call in the length'ning view;
Expand the forest sloping up the hill;
Swell to a lake the scant, penurious rill;
Extend the vista; raise the castle mound
In antique taste, with turrets ivy-crown'd:
O'er the gay lawn the flow'ry shrub dispread,
Or with the blending garden mix the mead;
Bid China's pale, fantastic fence delight;
Or with the mimic statue trap the sight.
Oft on some evening, sunny, soft, and still,
The Muse shall lead thee to the beech-grown hill,
To spend in tea the cool, refreshing hour,
Where nods in air the pensile, nest-like bower; *
Or where the hermit hangs the straw-clad cell,†
Emerging gently from the leafy dell,

* A kind of arbour on the side of a hill.

† A grotesque building, contrived by a young gentleman, who used on occasion to appear in the character of a hermit.



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By fancy plann'd ; as once th' inventive maid
Met the hoar sage amid the secret shade :
Romantic spot ! from whence in prospect lies
Whate'er of landscape charms our feasting eyes,—
The pointed spire, the hall, the pasture plain,
The russet fallow, or the golden grain,
The breezy lake that sheds a gleaming light,
Till all the fading picture fail the sight.
Each to his task ; all different ways retire :
Cull the dry stick ; call forth the seeds of fire ;
Deep fix the kettle's props, a forky row,
Or give with fanning hat the breeze to blow.
Whence is this taste, the furnish'd hall forgot,
To feast in gardens, or th' unhandy grot ?
Or novelty with some new charms surprises,
Or from our very shifts some joy arises.
Hark, while below the village bells ring round,
Echo, sweet nymph, returns the soften'd sound ;
But if gusts rise, the rushing forests roar,
Like the tide tumbling on the pebbly shore.
Adown the vale, in lone, sequester'd nook,
Where skirting woods imbrown the dimpling brook,
The ruin'd convent lies : here wont to dwell
The lazy canon midst his cloister'd cell,*
While Papal darkness brooded o'er the land,
Ere Reformation made her glorious stand :
Still oft at eve belated shepherd swains
See the cowl'd spectre skim the folded plains.
To the high Temple would my stranger go,†
The mountain-brow commands the woods below :
In Jewry first this order found a name,
When madding Croisades set the world in flame ;
When western climes, urged on by pope and priest
Pour'd forth their millions o'er the deluged East :

* The ruins of a Priory, founded by Peter de Rupibus, Bishop of Winchester.

† The remains of a Preceptory of the Knights Templars ; at least it was a farm dependent upon some preceptory of that order. I find it was a preceptory, called the *Preceptory of Suddington ;* now called Southington.

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Luxurious knights, ill suited to defy
To mortal fight Turcéstan chivalry.
Nor be the parsonage by the Muse forgot—
The partial bard admires his native spot;
Smit with its beauties, loved, as yet a child,
Unconscious why, its capes, grotesque and wild.
High on a mound th' exalted gardens stand,
Beneath, deep valleys, scoop'd by Nature's hand.
A Cobham here, exulting in his art,
Might blend the general's with the gardener's part;
Might fortify with all the martial trade
Of rampart, bastion, fosse, and palisade;
Might plant the mortar with wide threat'ning bore,
Or bid the mimic cannon seem to roar.
Now climb the steep, drop now your eye below
Where round the blooming village orchards grow;
There, like a picture, lies my lowly seat,
A rural, shelter'd, unobserved retreat.
Me far above the rest Selbornian scenes,
The pendent forests, and the mountain greens,
Strike with delight; there spreads the distant view,
That gradual fades till sunk in misty blue:
Here Nature hangs her slopy woods to sight,
Rills purl between and dart a quivering light.

---

## SELBORNE HANGER.

A WINTER PIECE. TO THE MISS B*****S.

The bard, who sang so late in blithest strain
Selbornian prospects, and the rural reign,
Now suits his plaintive pipe to sadden'd tone,
While the blank swains the changeful year bemoan.
How fallen the glories of these fading scenes!
The dusky beech resigns his vernal greens;
The yellow maple mourns in sickly hue,
And russet woodlands crowd the dark'ning view.

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Dim, clust'ring fogs involve the country round,
The valley and the blended mountain ground
Sink in confusion; but with tempest-wing
Should Boreas from his northern barrier spring,
The rushing woods with deaf'ning clamour roar,
Like the sea tumbling on the pebbly shore.
When spouting rains descend in torrent tides,
See the torn zigzag weep its channel'd sides:
Winter exerts its rage; heavy and slow,
From the keen east rolls on the treasured snow;
Sunk with its weight the bending boughs are seen,
And one bright deluge whelms the works of men.
Amidst this savage landscape, bleak and bare,
Hangs the chill hermitage in middle air;
Its haunts forsaken, and its feasts forgot,
A leaf-strown, lonely, desolated cot!
Is this the scene that late with rapture rang,
Where Delphy danced, and gentle Anna sang?
With fairy step where Harriet tripp'd so late,
And, on her stump reclined, the musing Kitty sate?
Return, dear nymphs; prevent the purple spring,
Ere the soft nightingale essays to sing;
Ere the first swallow sweeps the fresh'ning plain,
Ere love-sick turtles breathe their amorous pain;
Let festive glee th' enliven'd village raise,
Pan's blameless reign, and patriarchal days;
With pastoral dance the smitten swain surprise,
And bring all Arcady before our eyes.
Return, blithe maidens; with you bring along
Free, native humour; all the charms of song;
The feeling heart, and unaffected ease;
Each nameless grace and ev'ry power to please.

*Nov.* 1, 1763.

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## ON THE RAINBOW.*

"Look upon the Rainbow, and praise him that made it: very beautiful is it in the brightness thereof."—*Eccles.*, xliii. 11.

On morning or on evening cloud impress'd,
Bent in vast curve, the watery meteor shines
Delightfully, to th' levell'd sun opposed:
Lovely refraction! while the vivid brede
In listed colours glows, th' unconscious swain,
With vacant eye, gazes on the divine
Phenomenon, gleaming o'er the illumined fields,
Or runs to catch the treasures which it sheds.
Not so the sage: inspired with pious awe,
He hails the federal arch;† and looking up,
Adores that God, whose fingers form'd this bow
Magnificent, compassing heaven about
With a resplendent verge, "Thou mad'st the cloud,
"Maker omnipotent, and thou the bow;
"And by that covenant graciously hast sworn
"Never to drown the world again:‡ henceforth,
"Till time shall be no more, in ceaseless round,
"Season shall follow season: day to night,
"Summer to winter, harvest to seed time,
"Heat shall to cold in regular array
"Succeed."—Heav'n taught, so sang the Hebrew bard§

---

## A HARVEST SCENE.

Waked by the gentle gleamings of the morn,
Soon clad, the reaper, provident of want,
Hies cheerful-hearted to the ripen'd field:
Nor hastes alone: attendant by his side

* This and the following poem were published in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1783, page 955, as imitations of an old poet.—Ed.

† Gen., ix. 12—17. ‡ Gen., viii. 22. § Moses.

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His faithful wife, sole partner of his cares,
Bears on her breast the sleeping babe ; behind,
With steps unequal, trips her infant train ;
Thrice happy pair, in love and labour join'd !
All day they ply their task ; with mutual chat,
Beguiling each the sultry, tedious hours.
Around them falls in rows the sever'd corn,
Or the shocks rise in regular array.
But when high noon invites to short repast,
Beneath the shade of sheltering thorn they sit,
Divide the simple meal, and drain the cask :
The swinging cradle lulls the whimpering babe
Meantime ; while growling round, if at the tread
Of hasty passenger alarm'd, as of their store
Protective, stalks the cur with bristling back,
To guard the scanty scrip and russet frock.

---

## ON THE DARK, STILL, DRY, WARM WEATHER

OCCASIONALLY HAPPENING IN THE WINTER MONTHS.

Th' imprison'd winds slumber within their caves,
Fast bound : the fickle vane, emblem of change,
Wavers no more, long settling to a point.
All Nature nodding seems composed : thick steams,
From land, from flood up-drawn, dimming the day,
" Like a dark ceiling stand : " slow through the air
Gossamer floats, or, stretch'd from blade to blade,
The wavy net-work whitens all the field.
Push'd by the weightier atmosphere, up springs
The ponderous mercury, from scale to scale
Mounting, amidst the Torricellian tube.*
While high in air, and poised upon his wings,
Unseen, the soft, enamour'd woodlark runs

* The barometer.

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Through all his maze of melody; the brake,
Loud with the blackbird's bolder note, resounds.
Sooth'd by the genial warmth, the cawing rook
Anticipates the spring, selects her mate,
Haunts her tall nest-trees, and with sedulous care
Repairs her wicker eyrie, tempest-torn.
The ploughman inly smiles to see upturn
His mellow glebe, best pledge of future crop:
With glee the gardener eyes his smoking beds;
E'en pining sickness feels a short relief.
The happy schoolboy brings transported forth
His long-forgotten scourge, and giddy gig:
O'er the white paths he whirls the rolling hoop,
Or triumphs in the dusty fields of taw.
Not so the museful sage:—abroad he walks
Contemplative, if haply he may find
What cause controls the tempest's rage, or whence,
Amidst the savage season, Winter smiles.
For days, for weeks, prevails the placid calm.
At length some drops prelude a change: the sun
With ray refracted, bursts the parting gloom,
When all the chequer'd sky is one bright glare.
Mutters the wind at eve; th' horizon round
With angry aspect scowls: down rush the showers,
And float the deluged paths, and miry fields.

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THE

# NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS PENNANT, Esq.

AND

THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

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THE

# NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE.

## LETTER I.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

THE parish of Selborne lies in the extreme eastern corner of the county of Hampshire, bordering on the county of Sussex, and not far from the county of Surrey; is about fifty miles south-west of London, in latitude 51, and near midway between the towns of Alton and Petersfield. Being very large and extensive, it abuts on twelve parishes, two of which are in Sussex, viz. Trotton and Rogate. If you begin from the south, and proceed westward, the adjacent parishes are Emshot, Newton Valence, Faringdon, Harteley, Mauduit, Great Ward-le-ham, Kingsley, Hedleigh, Bramshot, Trotton, Rogate, Lysse, and Greatham. The soils of this district are almost as various and diversified as the views and aspects. The high part to the south-west consists of a vast hill of chalk, rising three hundred feet above the village; and is divided into a sheep-down, the high wood, and a long hanging wood, called the Hanger. The covert of this eminence is altogether beech, the most lovely of all forest trees, whether we consider its smooth rind or bark, its glossy foliage, or graceful pendulous boughs.* The down, or

* The beech is certainly a beautiful tree, either when planted singly or in lumps; but I cannot agree with our author, in thinking it the "*most lovely of all forest trees.*" The ash and birch, and perhaps the Huntingdon willow,

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sheep-walk, is a pleasing park-like spot, of about one mile by half that space, jutting out on the verge of the hill-country, where it begins to break down into the plains, and commanding a very engaging view, being an assemblage of hill, dale, woodlands, heath, and water. The prospect is bounded to the south-east and east by the vast range of mountains, called the Sussex Downs; by Guild-down, near Guildford, and by the Downs round Dorking, and Ryegate in Surrey, to the north-east; which altogether, with the country beyond Alton, and Farnham, form a noble and extensive outline.

At the foot of this hill, one stage, or step from the uplands, lies the village, which consists of one single straggling street, three quarters of a mile in length, in a sheltered vale and running parallel with the Hanger. The houses are divided from the hill by a vein of stiff clay, (good wheat land,) yet stand on a rock of white stone, little in appearance removed from chalk; but seems so far from being calcareous, that it endures extreme heat. Yet, that the freestone still preserves somewhat that is analogous to chalk, is plain, from the beeches, which descend as low as those rocks extend, and no farther, and thrive as well on them, where the ground is steep, as on the chalks.

The cart-way of the village divides, in a remarkable

are certainly more elegant and graceful: the former, I think, has been termed by Gilpin, the "Venus" of British trees. The plane and horse-chestnut will outvie it in a dense and deep rich foliage, while the oak will far outstrip all in an imposing and venerable aspect. The beech was formerly much more planted than at present. It was admirably suited for the landscape gardening of the last century; and the wood was of more value, being much in request for various parts of machinery, which the extensive use of iron has now superseded.—W. J.

We quite agree with Mr. White in his praise of the beech tree. When we consider the beauty of its velvet green leaves, as they first burst forth in the spring, and its glowing russet foliage in the autumn, and then look at its silvery bark, and bold projecting roots, both here and there covered with verdant mosses, it is impossible not to allow it to be "the most lovely of all forest trees." Those who have seen the Burnham beeches, the noble beech trees in Windsor Great Park and its adjoining forest, and those in a forest between Henley-on-Thames and Petsworth, will not be inclined to concur with Sir William Jardine, in preferring the ash, birch, and Huntingdon willow, to it. What are more graceful than the pendulous branches of the beech, covered with hoar frost in winter?—Ed.

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manner, two very incongruous soils. To the south-west is a rank clay, that requires the labour of years to render it mellow; while the gardens to the north-east, and small enclosures behind, consist of a warm, forward, crumbling mould, called black malm, which seems highly saturated with vegetable and animal manure; and these may perhaps have been the original site of the town; while the woods and coverts might extend down to the opposite bank.

At each end of the village, which runs from south-east to north-west, arises a small rivulet: that at the north-west end frequently fails; but the other is a fine perennial spring, little influenced by drought or wet seasons, called Well-head.* This breaks out of some high grounds adjoining to Nore Hill, a noble chalk promontory, remarkable for sending forth two streams into two different seas. The one to the south becomes a branch of the Arun, running to Arundel, and so falling into the British Channel; the other to the north. The Selborne stream makes one branch of the Wey; and, meeting the Blackdown stream at Hedleigh, and the Alton and Farnham stream at Tilford-bridge, swells into a considerable river, navigable at Godalming; from whence it passes to Guildford, and so into the Thames at Weybridge; and thus at the Nore into the German Ocean.

Our wells, at an average, run to about sixty-three feet, and, when sunk to that depth, seldom fail; but produce a fine limpid water, soft to the taste, and much commended by those who drink the pure element, but which does not lather well with soap.

To the north-west, north, and east, of the village, is a range of fair enclosures, consisting of what is called a white malm, a sort of rotten or rubble stone, which, when turned up to the frost and rain, moulders to pieces, and becomes manure to itself.†

Still on to the north-east, and a step lower, is a kind of

* This spring produced, September 14, 1781, after a severe hot summer, and a preceding dry spring and winter, nine gallons of water in a minute, which is five hundred and forty in an hour, and twelve thousand nine hundred and sixty, or two hundred and sixteen hogsheads in twenty-four hours, or one natural day. At this time many of the wells failed, and all the ponds in the vales were dry.

† This soil produces good wheat and clover.

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white land, neither chalk nor clay, neither fit for pasture nor for the plough, yet kindly for hops, which root deep into the freestone, and have their poles and wood for charcoal growing just at hand. This white soil produces the brightest hops.

As the parish still inclines down towards Wolmer Forest, at the juncture of the clays and sand, the soil becomes a wet, sandy loam, remarkable for timber, and infamous for roads. The oaks of Temple and Blackmoor stand high in the estimation of purveyors, and have furnished much naval timber; while the trees on the freestone grow large, but are what workmen call *shakey*, and so brittle as often to fall to pieces in sawing.* Beyond the sandy loam the soil becomes a hungry lean sand, till it mingles with the forest; and will produce little without the assistance of lime and turnips.

## LETTER II.

### TO THE SAME.

In the court of Norton farm-house, a manor farm to the north-west of the village, on the white malms, stood within these twenty years a broad-leaved elm, or wych hazel, *ulmus folio latissimo scabro*† of Ray, which, though it had lost a considerable leading bough in the great storm in the year

* The common larch is very soon lost when planted above a substratum of red sandstone. In the Vale of the Annan, wherever the sloping banks have a substratum of this rock, or one composed of a sort of red sandstone, shingle, or gravel, the outward decay of the tree is visible at from fifteen to twenty-five years of age. The internal decay commences sooner, according to the depth of the upper soil, in the centre of the trunk, at the root, in the wood being of a darker colour, extending by degrees in circumference and up the stem, until the lower part of it becomes entirely deprived of vegetation, and assumes a tough and corky appearance. This extends to the whole plant, which gradually decays and dies. On the same soil the oak grows and thrives well.

The "*freestone*" to which Mr. White refers, is the white or grey, and may have a different effect on these trees.—W. J.

† The *ulmus montana*, Sir J. E. Smith, and the most common in Scotland. There are four additional species admitted into the Flora of Great Britain, which are now to be generally met with in the plantations made within the last twelve or fifteen years.—W. J.

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1703, equal to a moderate tree, yet, when felled, contained eight loads of timber; and being too bulky for a carriage, was sawn off at seven feet above the butt, where it measured near eight feet in diameter.* This elm I mention, to show to what a bulk planted elms may attain; as this tree must certainly have been such, from its situation.† In the centre of the village, and near the church, is a square piece of ground, surrounded by houses, and vulgarly called the Plestor.‡ In the midst of this spot stood, in olden times, a

* The dimensions here alluded to are insignificant, when compared with those of a wych elm recorded by Mr. Evelyn, growing in Sir Walter Bagot's park, in the county of Stafford, which, after two men had been five days felling, lay 40 yards in length, and was at the stool 17 feet diameter. It broke in the fall, 14 loads of wood: 48 in the top: yielding 8 pair of naves, 8660 feet of boards and planks; it cost 10*l.* 17*s.* the sawing. The whole esteemed 97 tons.—Evelyn's *Sylva*, ii. 189.

Pitte's elm, in the Vale of Gloucester, was, in 1783, about 80 feet high, and the smallest girth of the principal trunk was 16 feet.—W. J.

Dr. Plot mentions an elm growing on Blechington Green, which gave reception and harbour to a poor great-bellied woman, whom the inhospitable people would not receive into their houses, who was brought to bed in it of a son, now a lusty young fellow.—Plot's *Oxfordshire*.—W. J.

† One of the largest wych elms in England is now growing and flourishing in the grounds of Mr. and Lady Charlotte Penrhyn, at Sheen, Surrey. Two hundred persons lately sat down to a *déjeûner* under the shade of its spreading branches.—Ed.

Our largest trees are quite insignificant when compared with one our present excellent bishop of New Zealand discovered in one of the Tonga Islands, a part of his diocese. In a letter to his father he mentions, that having measured it, he found it 23 fathoms, or 138 feet in circumference! Humboldt, in his very interesting work, "Views of Nature," has a chapter on the age and size of trees, in which he mentions the pine tree, "*Taxodium distichon*," as measuring above 40 feet in diameter.—See Bohn's edition, p. 274. Other remarkable examples will be found in Loudon's *Arboretum*.—Ed.

‡ Sir W. Jardine gives the following explanation of the *Plestor*, in the Antiquities of Selborne. It appears to have been left as a sort of redeeming offering by Sir Adam Gordon, in olden times an inhabitant of Selborne, well known in English history during the reign of Henry III., particularly as a leader of the Mountfort faction. Mr. White says:—"As Sir Adam began to advance in years, he found his mind influenced by the prevailing opinion of the reasonableness and efficacy of prayers for the dead; and, therefore, in conjunction with his wife Constantia, in the year 1271, granted to the prior and convent of Selborne all his right and claim to a certain place, *placea*, called *La Pleystow*, in the village aforesaid, '*in liberam, puram, et perpetuam elemosinam*,' (for free charitable purposes). This *pleystow*, *locus ludorum*, or play-place, is in a level area near the church, of about 44 yards by 36, and is known now by the name of *Plestor*. It continues still, as it was in old



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vast oak,* with a short squat body, and huge horizontal arms, extending almost to the extremity of the area. This venerable tree, surrounded with stone steps, and seats above them, was the delight of old and young, and a place of much resort in summer evenings; where the former sat in grave debate, while the latter frolicked and danced before them. Long might it have stood, had not the amazing tempest in 1703 overturned it at once, to the infinite regret of the inhabitants, and the vicar, who bestowed several pounds in setting it in its place again: but all his care could not avail; the tree sprouted for a time, then withered and died. This oak I mention, to show to what a bulk planted oaks also may arrive; and planted this tree must certainly have been, as appears from what is known concerning the antiquities of the village.†

times, to be the scene of recreation for the youths and children of the neighbourhood; and impresses an idea on the mind, that this village, even in Saxon times, could not be the most abject of places, when the inhabitants thought proper to assign so spacious a spot for the sports and amusements of its young people."—W. J.

* Two species of oak only are admitted into the British Flora, *quercus robur*, and *sessiliflora*. Several others, however, have been introduced, and grow well; the *quercus robur* is, nevertheless, superior to all of them. The other species are said to be more susceptible of the dry rot.—W. J.

† The celebrated Cowthorpe oak, upon an estate near Wetherby, belonging to the Right Hon. Lady Stourton, measures, within three feet of the surface, 16 yards in circumference, and close by the ground, 26 yards. Its height is about 80 feet, and its principal limb extends 16 yards from the boll. The Greendale oak, at a foot from the ground, is in circumference 33 feet 10 inches. The Shire oak covers nearly 707 square yards; the branches stretching into three counties,—York, Nottingham, and Derby. The Fairlop oak in Essex, at a yard from the ground, is 36 feet in circumference. Damory's oak, in Dorsetshire, at the ground, was in circumference 68 feet, and, when decaying, became hollow, forming a cavity capable of containing 20 men. An oak, felled at Withy Park, Shropshire, in 1697, was 9 feet in diameter without the bark. The Baddington oak, in the Vale of Gloucester, was 54 feet in circumference at the base; and Wallace's oak, in Torwood, in the county of Stirling, must have been at least 11 or 12 feet in diameter.—W. J.

The Galynoe oak was one of the largest trees of the kind in England on record. It grew in the county of Monmouth. Five men were each twenty days in stripping and cutting it down; and a pair of sawyers were constantly employed 138 days in its conversion. The expense alone of doing this was 82*l*. The main trunk of the tree was nine feet and a half in diameter. It had been improving for 400 years, as found from the rings in its butt. When standing, it overspread 452 square yards. Its produce was 2426 feet of solid timber, as ascertained from the navy office returns. The bark produced 600 pounds.—Ed.

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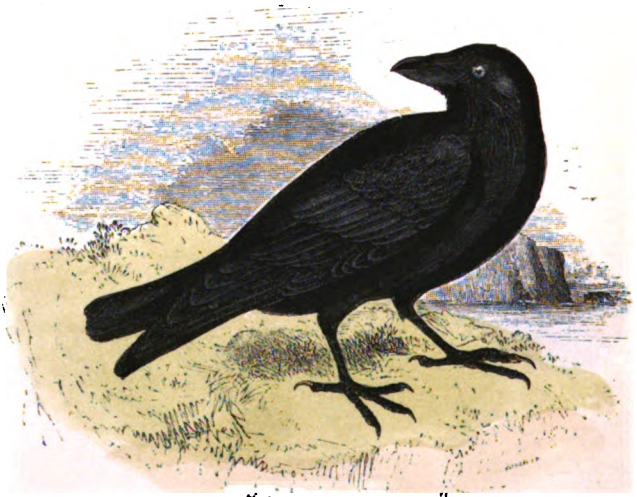

THE RAVEN. (*Corrus Corax.*)

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On the Blackmoor estate there is a small wood called Losel's, of a few acres, that was lately furnished with a set of oaks of a peculiar growth and great value: they were tall and taper like firs, but, standing near together, had very small heads,—only a little brush, without any large limbs. About twenty years ago, the bridge at the Toy, near Hampton Court, being much decayed, some trees were wanted for the repairs, that were fifty feet long without bough, and would measure twelve inches diameter at the little end.* Twenty such trees did a purveyor find in this little wood, with this advantage, that many of them answered the description at sixty feet. These trees were sold for £20 a-piece.

In the centre of this grove there stood an oak, which, though shapely and tall on the whole, bulged out into a large excrescence about the middle of the stem. On this a pair of ravens had fixed their residence for such a series of years, that the oak was distinguished by the title of the Raven Tree. Many were the attempts of the neighbouring youths to get at this eyrie: the difficulty whetted their inclinations, and each was ambitious of surmounting the arduous task. But when they arrived at the swelling, it jutted out so in their way, and was so far beyond their grasp, that the most daring lads were awed, and acknowledged the undertaking to be too hazardous. So the ravens built on, nest upon nest, in perfect security, till the fatal day arrived in which the wood was to be levelled. It was in the month of February, when those birds usually sit. The saw was applied to the butt, the wedges were inserted into the opening, the woods echoed to the heavy blows of the beetle, or mallet, the tree nodded to its fall; but still the dam sat on. At last, when it gave way, the bird was flung from her nest; and, though her parental affection deserved a better fate, was whipped down by the twigs, which brought her dead to the ground.†

* The greater part of these trees still support the bridge.—Ed.

† A similar instance of parental affection occurred, a few years ago, in Richmond Park. Some tall spindly trees had to be taken down. A squirrel had built her *drey* on the top of one of them, and had just brought forth some young. The axe was applied to the roots of the tree; the cord swayed it backwards and forwards; and at last it fell; and the affectionate mother was killed in the fall, refusing to the last to quit her hapless offspring.—Ed.



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## LETTER III.

### TO THE SAME.

THE fossil shells of this district, and sorts of stone, such as have fallen within my observation, must not be passed over in silence. And, first, I must mention, as a great curiosity, a specimen that was ploughed up in the chalky fields, near the side of the Down, and given to me for the singularity of its appearance, which, to an incurious eye, seems like a petrified fish of about four inches long, the cardo passing for a head and mouth. It is in reality a bivalve of the Linnæan genus of *mytilis*, and the species of *crista galli*: called by Lister, *rastellum*; by Rumphius, *ostreum plicatum minus*; by D'Argenville, *auris porci*, s. *crista galli*; and by those who make collections, cock's comb. Though I applied to several such in London, I never could meet with an entire specimen; nor could I ever find in books any engraving from a perfect one. In the superb museum at Leicester House, permission was given me to examine for this article; and though I was disappointed as to the fossil, I was highly gratified with the sight of several of the shells themselves in high preservation. This bivalve is only known to inhabit the Indian Ocean, where it fixes itself to a zoophyte, known by the name *gorgonia*.

*Cornua ammonis** are very common about this village. As we were cutting an inclining path up the Hanger, the labourers found them frequently on that steep, just under the soil, in the chalk, and of a considerable size. In the lane above Wellhead, in the way to Emshot, they abound in

* There is a village in the west of England, remarkable for the quantity it possesses of the "*Cornu ammonis*." The name of it is Keynsham, between Bath and Bristol. This has given rise to a fabulous legend, which says that St. Keyna, from whom the place takes its name, resided here in a solitary wood, full of venemous serpents, and her prayers converted them into stones, which still retain their shape.—See Espriella's *Letters from England*, vol. iii. p. 362.—REV. J. MITFORD.

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the bank, in a darkish sort of marl; and are usually very small and soft; but in Clay's Pond, a little farther on, at the end of the pit, where the soil is dug out for manure, I have occasionally observed them of large dimensions, perhaps fourteen or sixteen inches in diameter. But as these did not consist of firm stone, but were formed of a kind of *terra lapidosa*, or hardened clay, as soon as they were exposed to the rains and frost, they mouldered away. These seemed as if they were a very recent production. In the chalk-pit, at the north-west end of the Hanger, large *nautili* are sometimes observed.

In the very thickest strata of our freestone, and at considerable depths, well diggers often find large scallops, or pectines, having both shells deeply striated, and ridged and furrowed alternately. They are highly impregnated with, if not wholly composed of, the stone of the quarry.

## LETTER IV.

### TO THE SAME.

As, in last letter, the freestone of this place has been only mentioned incidentally, I shall here become more particular.

This stone is in great request for hearth-stones, and the beds of ovens; and in lining of lime-kilns it turns to good account; for the workmen use sandy loam instead of mortar; the sand of which fluxes,* and runs, by the intense heat, and so cases over the whole face of the kiln with a strong vitrified coat like glass, that it is well preserved from injuries of weather, and endures thirty or forty years. When chiselled smooth, it makes elegant fronts for houses, equal in colour and grain to the Bath stone; and superior in one respect, that, when seasoned, it does not scale. Decent chimney-pieces are worked from it, of much closer and finer grain than Portland; and rooms are floored with

* There may, probably, be also in the chalk itself, that is burnt for lime a proportion of sand; for few chalks are so pure as to have none.

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it; but it proves rather too soft for this purpose. It is a freestone, cutting in all directions; yet has something of a grain parallel with the horizon, and therefore should not be surbedded, but laid in the same position that it grows in the quarry.* On the ground abroad this fire-stone will not succeed for pavements, because, probably, some degree of saltness prevailing within it, the rain tears the slabs to pieces.† Though this stone is too hard to be acted on by vinegar, yet both the white part, and even the blue rag, ferment strongly in mineral acids. Though the white stone will not bear wet, yet in every quarry, at intervals, there are thin strata of blue rag, which resist rain and frost, and are excellent for pitching of stables, paths, and courts, and for building of dry walls against banks, a valuable species of fencing, much in use in this village; and for mending of roads. This rug is ragged and stubborn, and will not hew to a smooth face; but is very durable: yet, as these strata are shallow, and lie deep, large quantities cannot be procured but at considerable expense. Among the blue rags turn up some blocks tinged with a stain of yellow, or rust colour, which seem to be nearly as lasting as the blue; and every now and then balls of a friable substance, like rust of iron, called rust balls.

In Wolmer Forest, I see but one sort of stone, called by the workmen sand, or forest stone. This is generally of the colour of rusty iron, and might probably be worked as iron ore; is very hard and heavy, and of a firm, compact texture, and composed of a small roundish crystalline grit, cemented together by a brown, terrene, ferruginous matter; will not cut without difficulty, nor easily strike fire with steel. Being often found in broad flat pieces, it makes good pavement for paths about houses, never becoming slippery in frost or rain; is excellent for dry walls, and is sometimes used in buildings. In many parts of that waste, it lies

* To *surbed* stone is to set it edgewise, contrary to the posture it had in the quarry, says Dr. Plot.—*Oxfordsh.* p. 77. But surbedding does not succeed in our dry walls; neither do we use it so in ovens, though he says it is best for Teynton stone.

† "Firestone is full of salts, and has no sulphur; must be close grained, and have no interstices. Nothing supports fire like salts; saltstone perishes exposed to wet and frost."—Plot's *Staff.* p. 152.

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scattered on the surface of the ground; but is dug on Weaver's Down, a vast hill on the eastern verge of that forest, where the pits are shallow, and the stratum thin.

This stone is imperishable.

From a notion of rendering their work the more elegant, and giving it a finish, masons chip this stone into small fragments about the size of the head of a large nail, and then stick the pieces into the wet mortar along the joints of their freestone walls. This embellishment carries an odd appearance, and has occasioned strangers sometimes to ask us pleasantly, "Whether we fastened our walls together with tenpenny nails?"

## LETTER V.

### TO THE SAME.

Among the singularities of this place, the two rocky hollow lanes, the one to Alton, and the other to the forest, deserve our attention. These roads, running through the malm lands, are, by the traffic of ages, and the fretting of water, worn down through the first stratum of our freestone, and partly through the second; so that they look more like water-courses than roads; and are bedded with naked rag for furlongs together. In many places they are reduced sixteen or eighteen feet beneath the level of the fields; and, after floods, and in frosts, exhibit very grotesque and wild appearances, from the tangled roots that are twisted among the strata, and from the torrents rushing down their broken sides; and especially when those cascades are frozen into icicles, hanging in all the fanciful shapes of frost-work. These rugged gloomy scenes affright the ladies when they peep down into them, from the paths above, and make timid horsemen shudder while they ride along them; but delight the naturalist with their various botany, and particularly with their curious filices, with which they abound.*

* The deep lanes in this part of Hampshire and Sussex are truly charming, from the roots of trees twisting themselves, as they do, in fantastic shapes

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The manor of Selborne, were it strictly looked after, with all its kindly aspects, and all its sloping coverts, would swarm with game: even now, hares, partridges, and pheasants, abound; and in old days, woodcocks were as plentiful. There are few quails, because they more affect open fields than enclosures; after harvest some few land-rails are seen.

The parish of Selborne, by taking in so much of the forest, is a vast district. Those who tread the bounds are employed part of three days in the business, and are of opinion that the outline, in all its curves and indentings, does not comprise less than thirty miles.

The village stands in a sheltered spot, secured by the Hanger from the strong westerly winds. The air is soft, but rather moist from the effluvia of so many trees; yet perfectly healthy, and free from agues.

The quantity of rain that falls on it is very considerable, as may be supposed in so woody and mountainous a district. As my experience in measuring the water is but of short date, I am not qualified to give the mean quantity.* I only know that

| | Inch. | Hund. |
|---|---|---|
| From May 1, 1779, to the end of the year, there fell | 28 | 37! |
| From Jan. 1, 1780, to Jan. 1, 1781 | 27 | 32 |
| From Jan. 1, 1781, to Jan. 1, 1782 | 30 | 71 |
| From Jan. 1, 1782, to Jan. 1, 1783 | 50 | 26! |
| From Jan. 1, 1783, to Jan. 1, 1784 | 33 | 71 |
| From Jan. 1, 1784, to Jan. 1, 1785 | 33 | 80 |
| From Jan. 1, 1785, to Jan. 1, 1786 | 31 | 55 |
| From Jan. 1, 1786, to Jan. 1, 1787 | 39 | 57 |

The village of Selborne, and large hamlet of Oakhanger, with the single farms, and many scattered houses along the

among the rocky strata,—the quantity of wild flowers,—the pretty mosses covering the rocks and roots,—the trickling water over head,—and the shade afforded by overhanging trees and shrubs.—Ed.

* A very intelligent gentleman assures me, (and he speaks from upwards of forty years' experience), that the mean rain of any place cannot be ascertained till a person has measured it for a very long period. "If I had only measured the rain," says he, "for the four first years from 1740 to 1743, I should have said the mean rain at Lyndon was 16½ inches for the year; if from 1740 to 1750, 18½ inches. The mean rain before 1763 was 20¼; from 1763 and since, 25½; from 1770 to 1780, 26. If only 1773, 1774, and 1775 had been measured, Lyndon mean rain would have been called 32 inches,—increasing from 16·6 to 32.

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verge of the forest, contain upwards of six hundred and seventy inhabitants.

We abound with poor; many of whom are sober and industrious, and live comfortably, in good stone or brick cottages, which are glazed, and have chambers above stairs; mud buildings we have none. Besides the employment from husbandry, the men work in hop gardens, of which we have many; and fell and bark timber. In the spring and summer the women weed the corn; and enjoy a second harvest in September by hop-picking. Formerly, in the dead months, they availed themselves greatly by spinning wool, for making of barragons, a genteel corded stuff, much in vogue at that time for summer wear; and chiefly manufactured at Alton, a neighbouring town, by some of the people called Quakers. The inhabitants enjoy a good share of health and longevity, and the parish swarms with children.

## LETTER VI.

### TO THE SAME.

SHOULD I omit to describe with some exactness the Forest of Wolmer, of which three-fifths perhaps lie in this parish, my account of Selborne would be very imperfect, as it is a district abounding with many curious productions, both animal and vegetable; and has often afforded me much entertainment, both as a sportsman and as a naturalist.*

The royal Forest of Wolmer is a tract of land of about seven miles in length, by two and a half in breadth, running nearly from north to south, and is abutted on—to begin to the south, and so to proceed eastward—by the parishes of Greatham, Lysse, Rogate, and Trotton, in the county of Sussex; by Bramshot, Hedleigh, and Kingsley. This royalty

* Wolmer Forest has partly been enclosed and planted by the Crown, and the shooting over it, with the large pond, so often mentioned by Mr. White, leased to Sir Charles Taylor, Bart., of Hollycombe.—Ed.

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consists entirely of sand, covered with heath and fern; but is somewhat diversified with hills and dales, without having one standing tree in the whole extent. In the bottoms, where the waters stagnate, are many bogs, which formerly abounded with subterraneous trees; though Dr. Plot says positively,* "that there never were any fallen trees hidden in the mosses of the southern counties." But he was mistaken; for I myself have seen cottages on the verge of this wild district, whose timbers consisted of a black hard wood, looking like oak, which the owners assured me they procured from the bogs by probing the soil with spits, or some such instruments; but the peat is so much cut out, and the moors have been so well examined, that none has been found of late.† Besides the oak, I have also been shown pieces of fossil-wood, of a paler colour, and softer nature, which the inhabitants called fir; but, upon a nice examination, and trial by fire, I could discover nothing resinous in them:

* See his *Hist. of Staffordshire.*

† Old people have assured me, that, on a winter's morning, they have discovered these trees, in the bogs, by the hoar frost, which lay longer over the space where they were concealed, than on the surrounding morass. Nor does this seem to be a fanciful notion, but consistent with true philosophy. Dr. Hales saith, "That the warmth of the earth, at some depth under ground, has an influence in promoting a thaw, as well as the change of the weather from a freezing to a thawing state, is manifest, from this observation, viz., Nov. 29, 1731, a little snow having fallen in the night, it was, by eleven the next morning, most melted away on the surface of the earth, except in several places in Bushy Park, where there were drains dug and covered with earth, on which the snow continued to lie, whether those drains were full of water or dry; as also where elm-pipes lay under ground: a plain proof this, that those drains intercepted the warmth of the earth from ascending from greater depths below them; for the snow lay where the drain had more than four feet depth of earth over it. It continued also to lie on thatch, tiles, and the tops of walls."—See Hales's *Hæmastatics*, p. 360. Quere, Might not such observations be reduced to domestic use, by promoting the discovery of old obliterated drains and wells about houses; and, in Roman stations and camps, lead to the finding of pavements, baths, and graves, and other hidden relics of curious antiquity?

I have now in my possession a snuff-box, formerly the property of Sir Walter Scott, on which is the following inscription: "Oak found near Gordon Castle, twenty feet below the surface of the ground." From the great age of the wood, it has the appearance of having nearly turned to a substance resembling agate. In a bog in Staffordshire, with which I am well acquainted, huge oak trees, at a considerable depth, might be found, from the snow having melted away on the surface.—Ed.

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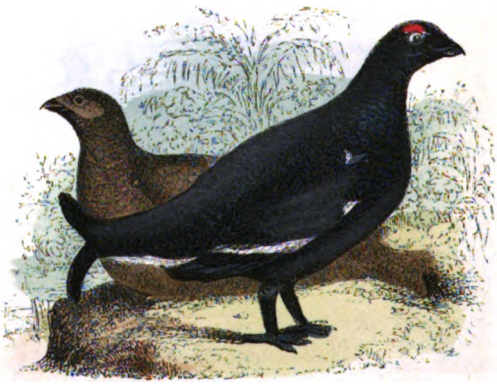

BLACK GROUSE.

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and, therefore, rather suppose that they were parts of a willow or alder, or some such aquatic tree.*

This lonely domain is a very agreeable haunt for many sorts of wild fowls, which not only frequent it in the winter, but breed there in the summer; such as lapwings, snipes, wild-ducks, and, as I have discovered within these few years, teals. Partridges in vast plenty are bred in good seasons on the verge of this forest, into which they love to make excursions; and in particular, in the dry summer of 1740 and 1741, and some years after, they swarmed to such a degree, that parties of unreasonable sportsmen killed twenty and sometimes thirty brace in a day.†

But there was a nobler species of game in this forest, now extinct, which I have heard old people say abounded much before shooting flying became so common, and that was the heath-cock, or black game. When I was a little boy, I recollect one coming now and then to my father's table. The last pack remembered was killed about thirty-five years ago; and within these ten years one solitary grey hen was sprung by some beagles, in beating for a hare. The sportsman cried out, "A hen pheasant!" but a gentleman present, who had often seen black game in the north of England, assured me that it was a grey hen.‡

* The remains of trees are found in most of the marshes in Great Britain; but the mosses in the north of England, and all those of Scotland, contain trees often of immense size. These are generally oak, birch, different willows, or alder, and the Scotch fir, *pinus sylvestris*. Being embedded to considerable depths, they are sometimes in a perfect state, and completely saturated with the soil in which they lie. In the Highlands, the Scotch fir abounds, and retains so much resin as to be used for lights during winter, for which purpose it is dug out, dried and split into narrow lengths.—W.J.

† Black game may now be found in the forest, and a few grouse.—Ed.

‡ Black game have increased greatly in the southern counties of Scotland and north of England within the last few years. It is a pretty general opinion, though an erroneous one, that they drive away the red grouse; the two species require very different kinds of cover, and will never interfere. It is to be regretted that some of our extensive and wealthy northern proprietors do not attempt the introduction of the wood grouse; extensive pine or birch forests with quiet, would be all the requisites; and the birds themselves, or their young, could be very easily obtained, and at a trifling expense. In Mr. J. Wilson's Zoological Illustrations, there is an excellent plate of the *tetrao urophasianus* of North America, a very handsome species, which, with some others lately discovered by Mr. Douglas, might be introduced into this country, and form

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Nor does the loss of our black game prove the only gap in the *Fauna Selbornienſis*, or "Natural History of Selborne;" for another beautiful link in the chain of beings is wanting,—I mean the red-deer,* which, toward the beginning of this century, amounted to about five hundred head, and made a stately appearance. There is an old keeper, now alive, named Adams, whose great-grandfather (mentioned in a perambulation taken in 1635), grandfather, father, and self, enjoyed the head keepership of Wolmer Forest in succession, for more than an hundred years. This person assures me, that his father has often told him that Queen Anne, as she was journeying on the Portsmouth road, did not think the Forest of Wolmer beneath her royal regard. For she came out of the great road at Liphock, which is just by, and reposing herself, on a bank, smoothed for that purpose, lying about half a mile to the east of Wolmer Pond, and still called Queen's Bank, saw with great complacency and satisfaction the whole herd of red-deer brought by the keepers along the vale before her, consisting then of about five hundred head.† A sight this, worthy the attention of the greatest sovereign! But he farther adds, that, by means of the Waltham blacks, or, to use his own expression, as soon as they began blacking, they were reduced to about fifty head, and so continued decreasing till the time of the late Duke of Cumberland. It is now more than thirty years ago that his highness sent down a huntsman, and six yeoman prickers, in scarlet jackets laced with gold, attended by the stag-hounds, order-

a fine addition to our feathered game. The little American partridge, the *ortyx borealis* of naturalists, has been introduced, and is now plentiful, in some counties in England.—W. J.

* Red deer are still to be found in the New Forest, and Her Majesty's buck-hounds are sent there every year to hunt them. One stag a few years ago found near Lyndhurst was taken not far from Salisbury.—Ed.

† The following curious fact may be mentioned with respect to red deer, as proving their attachment to favourite localities. The late Duke of Atholl, wishing to increase the stock of red deer in his park, took the opportunity of a very severe winter to draw the deer from their hills and mountains. This was done by scattering food in a line to the park, and a great extent of the paling of it was removed. When hunger had thus compelled the deer to enter it, toils were put up, the fencing was replaced and the deer enclosed. They pined away, however, and in two years not one was left alive.—Ed.

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ing them to take every deer in this forest alive, and to convey them in carts to Windsor. In the course of the summer they caught every stag, some of which showed extraordinary diversion; but, in the following winter, when the hinds were also carried off, such fine chases were exhibited as served the country people for matter of talk and wonder for years afterwards. I saw myself one of the yeoman prickers single out a stag from the herd, and must confess that it was the most curious feat of activity I ever beheld,—superior to anything in Mr. Astley's riding-school. The exertions made by the horse and deer much exceeded all my expectations, though the former greatly excelled the latter in speed. When the devoted deer was separated from his companions, they gave him, by their watches, law, as they called it, for twenty minutes; when, sounding their horns, the stop-dogs were permitted to pursue, and a most gallant scene ensued.

## LETTER VII.

### TO THE SAME.

THOUGH large herds of deer do much harm to the neighbourhood, yet the injury to the morals of the people is of more moment than the loss of their crops.* The temptation is irresistible; for most men are sportsmen by constitution: and there is such an inherent spirit for hunting in human nature, as scarce any inhibitions can restrain. Hence, towards the beginning of this century, all this country was wild about deer-stealing. Unless he were a hunter, as they affected to call themselves, no young person was allowed to

* Nothing can be more true than these remarks. The state of demoralisation of the people in the neighbourhood of the New Forest, for instance, is beyond what can well be imagined. Deer stealing is a temptation which few of them can resist, and the consequence is idleness, drunkenness, and immorality. The Act of Parliament which removes the deer from the New Forest, will confer a blessing on the whole neighbourhood.—ED.

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be possessed of manhood or gallantry. The Waltham blacks at length committed such enormities, that Government was forced to interfere with that severe and sanguinary act called the Black Act,* which now comprehends more felonies than any law that ever was framed before; and, therefore, a late bishop of Winchester, when urged to re-stock Waltham chase,† refused, from a motive worthy of a prelate, replying, that "It had done mischief enough already."

Our old race of deer-stealers are hardly extinct yet. It was but a little while ago that, over their ale, they used to recount the exploits of their youth; such as watching the pregnant hind to her lair, and when the calf was dropped, paring its feet with a penknife to the quick, to prevent its escape, till it was large and fat enough to be killed; the shooting at one of their neighbours with a bullet, in a turnip-field, by moonshine, mistaking him for a deer; and the losing a dog in the following extraordinary manner:—Some fellows, suspecting that a calf new-fallen was deposited in a certain spot of thick fern, went with a lurcher to surprise it; when the parent hind rushed out of the brake, and taking a vast spring, with all her feet close together, pitched upon the neck of the dog, and broke it short in two.

Another temptation to idleness and sporting, was a number of rabbits, which possessed all the hillocks and dry places; but these being inconvenient to the huntsmen, on account of their burrows, when they came to take away the deer, they permitted the country people to destroy them all.

Such forests and wastes, when their allurements to irregularities are removed, are of considerable service to neighbourhoods that verge upon them, by furnishing them with peat and turf for their firing; with fuel for the burning their lime; and with ashes for their grasses; and by maintaining their geese and their stock of young cattle at little or no expense.‡

* Statute 9 Geo. I. c. 22.

† This chase remains unstocked to this day; the bishop was Dr. Hoadley.

‡ This was the case when Mr. White wrote this passage; but alas, since then Parliamentary enactments have deprived the labourers of much of their rights of common, by enclosing them, and thus much of their means of subsistence, and consequently of their prosperity, have disappeared. Whenever labour was slack, the common was always a reserve on which the labourer could employ himself, by cutting fuel, making brooms, &c.—Ed.

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The manor farm of the parish of Greatham has an admitted claim, I see, by an old record taken from the Tower of London, of turning all live stock on the forest, at proper seasons, *bidentibus exceptis*, "sheep excepted." * The reason, I presume, why sheep are excluded is, because, being such close grazers, they would pick out all the finest grasses, and hinder the deer from thriving.

Though (by statute 4 and 5 William and Mary, c. 23) "to burn on any waste, between Candlemas and Midsummer, any grig, ling, heath and furze, gorse, or fern, is punishable with whipping, and confinement in the house of correction;" yet, in this forest, about March or April, according to the dryness of the season, such vast heath-fires are lighted up, that they often get to a masterless head, and, catching the hedges, have sometimes been communicated to the underwoods, woods, and coppices, where great damage has ensued. The plea for these burnings is, that, when the old coat of heath, &c., is consumed, young will sprout up, and afford much tender browse for cattle; but where there is large old furze, the fire, following the roots, consumes the very ground; so that for hundreds of acres nothing is to be seen but smother and desolation, the whole circuit round looking like the cinders of a volcano; and, the soil being quite exhausted, no traces of vegetation are to be found for years. These conflagrations, as they take place usually with a north-east or east wind, much annoy this village with their smoke, and often alarm the country; and once, in particular, I remember that a gentleman, who lives beyond Andover, coming to my house, when he got on the downs between that town and Winchester, at twenty-five miles distance, was surprised much with smoke and a hot smell of fire; and concluded that Alresford was in flames; but when he came to that town, he then had apprehensions for the next village, and so on to the end of his journey.

On two of the most conspicuous eminences of this forest, stand two arbours, or bowers, made of the boughs of oaks; the one called Waldon Lodge, the other Brimstone Lodge; these the keepers renew annually on the feast of St. Barnabas,

* For this privilege the owner of that estate used to pay to the king annually seven bushels of oats.

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taking the old materials for a perquisite. The farm called Blackmoor, in this parish, is obliged to find the posts and brushwood for the former; while the farms at Greatham, in rotation, furnish for the latter; and are all enjoined to cut and deliver the materials at the spot. This custom I mention, because I look upon it to be of very remote antiquity.

## LETTER VIII.

### TO THE SAME.

On the verge of the forest, as it is now circumscribed, are three considerable lakes; two in Oakhanger, of which I have nothing particular to say; and one called Bin's, or Bean's Pond, which is worthy the attention of a naturalist or a sportsman; for, being crowded at the upper end with willows, and with the *carex cespitosa*, "clumpy sedge,"* it affords such a safe and pleasant shelter to wild ducks, teals, snipes, &c. that they breed there. In the winter this covert is also frequented by foxes, and sometimes by pheasants; and the bogs produce many curious plants.†

By a perambulation of Wolmer Forest and the Holt, made in 1635, and the eleventh year of Charles the First, (which now lies before me,) it appears that the limits of the former are much circumscribed. For, to say nothing of the farther side, with which I am not so well acquainted, the bounds on this side, in old times, came into Binswood, and extended to the ditch of Ward-le-ham Park, in which stands the curious mount, called King John's Hill, and Lodge Hill, and to the verge of Hartley Mauduit, called Mauduit-hatch; comprehending also Shortheath, Oakhanger, and Oak-woods; a large district, now private property, though once belonging to the royal domain.

* I mean that sort which, rising into tall hassocks, is called by the foresters *torrets*; a corruption I suppose of turrets.

Wild ducks and teal also breed in the thick heather in the neighbourhood.—Ed.

† For which consult Letter LXXXIV. to Mr. Barrington.

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It is remarkable, that the term *purlieu* is never once mentioned in this long roll of parchment. It contains, besides the perambulation, a rough estimate of the value of the timbers, which were considerable, growing at that time in the district of the Holt; and enumerates the officers, superior and inferior, of those joint forests, for the time being, and their ostensible fees and perquisites. In those days, as at present, there were hardly any trees in Wolmer Forest.

Within the present limits of the forest are three considerable lakes, Hogmer, Cranmer, and Wolmer; all of which are stocked with carp, tench, eels, and perch: but the fish do not thrive well, because the water is hungry, and the bottoms are a naked sand.

A circumstance respecting these ponds, though by no means peculiar to them, I cannot pass over in silence: and that is, that instinct by which in summer all the kine, whether oxen, cows, calves, or heifers, retire constantly to the water during the hotter hours; where, being more exempt from flies, and inhaling the coolness of that element, some belly deep, and some only to mid-leg, they ruminate and solace themselves from about ten in the morning till four in the afternoon, and then return to their feeding. During this great proportion of the day, they drop much dung, in which insects nestle, and so supply food for the fish, which would be poorly subsisted, but for this contingency.* Thus Nature, who is a great economist, converts the recreation of one animal to the support of another! Thomson, who was a nice observer of natural occurrences, did not let this pleasing circumstance escape him. He says in his *Summer*,—

> "A various group the herds and flocks compose:
> ——————— on the grassy bank,
> Some ruminating lie; while others stand
> Half in the flood, and, often bending, sip
> The circling surface."

Wolmer Pond, so called, I suppose, for eminence sake, is

* This passage proves what an accurate observer Mr. White was of apparently trifling facts and circumstances in natural history. He might have added to the above that so economical is Nature, that when cattle are standing in the water, they whisk off vast quantities of flies, which are greedily devoured by the fish which assemble about them, and these, more than the dung, supply them with food.—Ed.



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a vast lake for this part of the world, containing in its whole circumference, 2649 yards, or very near a mile and a half. The length of the north-west and opposite side is about 704 yards and the breadth of the south-west end about 456 yards. This measurement, which I caused to be made with good exactness, gives an area of about sixty-six acres, exclusive of a large irregular arm at the north-east corner, which we did not take into the reckoning.

On the face of this expanse of waters, and perfectly secure from fowlers, lie all day long, in the winter season, vast flocks of ducks, teals, and widgeons, of various denominations; where they preen, and solace, and rest themselves, till towards sunset, when they issue forth in little parties—for in their natural state they are all birds of the night—to feed in the brooks and meadows: returning again with the dawn of the morning! Had this lake an arm or two more, and were it planted round with thick covert (for now it is perfectly naked), it might make a valuable decoy.

Yet neither its extent, nor the clearness of its water, nor the resort of various and curious fowls, nor its picturesque groups of cattle, can render this *mere* so remarkable, as the great quantity of coins that were found in its bed about forty years ago.*

## LETTER IX.

### TO THE SAME.

By way of supplement, I shall trouble you once more on this subject, to inform you that Wolmer, with her sister forest Ayles Holt, *alias* Alice Holt,† as it is called in old records, is held by grant from the crown for a term of years.

* Some of these coins came afterwards into the possession of the author. They were all copper, part were of Marcus Aurelius, and the Empress Faustina, his wife, the father and mother of Commodus.—W. J.

† "In Rot. Inquisit. de statu forest. in Scaccar. 36 Ed. III.," it is called Aisholt. In the same, "Tit. Woolmer and Aisholt Hantisc. Dominus Rex habet unam capellam in *haia* suâ de Kingesle." "*Haia, sepes, sepimentum, varcus:* a Gall. *haie* and *haye*."—Spelman's *Glossary.*

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THE FALLOW DEER. (*Cervus dama.*)

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The grantees that the author remembers, are,—Brigadier-General Emanuel Scroope Howe, and his lady, Ruperta, who was a natural daughter of Prince Rupert, by Margaret Hughs; a Mr. Mordaunt, of the Peterborough family, who married a dowager Lady Pembroke; Henry Bilson Legge and lady; and now Lord Stawel, their son.*

The lady of General Howe lived to an advanced age, long surviving her husband; and, at her death, left behind her many curious pieces of mechanism of her father's constructing, who was a distinguished mechanic and artist,† as well as warrior: and, among the rest, a very complicated clock, lately in possession of Mr. Elmer, the celebrated game painter at Farnham, in the county of Surrey.

Though these two forests are only parted by a narrow range of enclosures, yet no two soils can be more different; for the Holt consists of a strong loam, of a miry nature, carrying a good turf, and abounding with oaks that grow to be large timber; while Wolmer is nothing but a hungry, sandy, barren waste.

The former, being all in the parish of Binsted, is about two miles in extent from north to south, and near as much from east to west, and contains within it many woodlands and lawns, and the Great Lodge where the grantees reside, and a smaller lodge called Goose Green; and is abutted on by the parishes of Kingsley, Frinsham, Farnham, and Bentley, all of which have right of common.

One thing is remarkable, that, though the Holt has been of old well stocked with fallow-deer, unrestrained by any pales or fences more than a common hedge, yet they were never seen within the limits of Wolmer; nor were the red deer of Wolmer ever known to haunt the thickets or glades of the Holt.

At present the deer of the Holt are much thinned and reduced by the night-hunters, who perpetually harass them,

* At Lord Stawel's death, the property reverted to Heneage Legge, Esq., afterwards to the Hon. Henry Legge and the Hon. and Rev. Augustus Legge, at whose death it was inherited by his eldest son.—Ed.

† Prince Rupert has long been the reputed inventor of mezzotinto, but it is proved on sufficient authority that he was merely the introducer of the art into this country. The invention was made in 1642, by a Dutchman named Ludwig von Siegen, who communicated it to Prince Rupert about the year 1654. See full particulars in Bohn's edition of Walpole's Anecdotes of Painters and Engravers, vol. iii. p. 923.—Ed.



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in spite of the efforts of numerous keepers, and the severe penalties that have been put in force against them, as often as they have been detected, and rendered liable to the lash of the law. Neither fines nor imprisonments can deter them; so impossible is it to extinguish the spirit of sporting, which seems to be inherent in human nature.*

General Howe turned out some German wild boars and sows in his forests, to the great terror of the neighbourhood; and, at one time, a wild bull, or buffalo: but the country rose upon them, and destroyed them.

A very large fall of timber, consisting of about one thousand oaks, has been cut this spring (viz. 1784), in the Holt Forest; one-fifth of which, it is said, belongs to the grantee, Lord Stawel. He lays claim also to the lop and top; but the poor of the parishes of Binsted and Frinsham, Bentley and Kingsley, assert that it belongs to them; and, assembling in a riotous manner, have actually taken it all away. One man, who keeps a team, has carried home for his share, forty stacks of wood. Forty-five of these people his lordship has served with actions. These trees, which were very sound, and in high perfection, were winter cut, viz. in February and March, before the bark would run. In old times, the Holt was estimated to be eighteen miles, computed measure, from water carriage, viz. from the town of Chertsey, on the Thames; but now it is not half that distance, since the Wey is made navigable up to the town of Godalming, in the county of Surrey.

## LETTER X.

### TO THE SAME.

*August* 4, 1767.

It has been my misfortune never to have had any neighbours whose studies have led them towards the pursuit of natural knowledge; so that, for want of a companion to quicken my industry and sharpen my attention, I have made but slender progress in a kind of information to which I have been attached from my childhood.

* There are now no deer in either Holt or Woolmer Forest.—Ed.

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As to swallows (*hirundines rusticæ*) being found in a torpid state during the winter, in the Isle of Wight, or any part of this country, I never heard any such account worth attending to. But a clergyman, of an inquisitive turn, assures me, that when he was a great boy, some workmen, in pulling down the battlements of a church tower early in the spring, found two or three swifts (*hirundines apodes*) among the rubbish, which were at first appearance dead; but, on being carried toward the fire, revived. He told me that, out of his great care to preserve them, he put them in a paper bag, and hung them by the kitchen fire, where they were suffocated.

Another intelligent person has informed me that, while he was a schoolboy at Brighthelmstone, in Sussex, a great fragment of the chalk cliff fell down, one stormy winter, on the beach, and that many people found swallows among the rubbish; but, on my questioning him whether he saw any of those birds himself, to my no small disappointment he answered me in the negative; but that others assured him they did.

Young broods of swallows began to appear this year on July the 11th, and young martins (*hirundines urbicæ*) were then fledged in their nests. Both species will breed again once; for I see by my Fauna of last year, that young broods came forth so late as September the 18th.* Are not these

* It will be seen in perusing this work that Mr. White constantly entertained the idea that swallows occasionally hybernated in this country, although he has failed in bringing forward any conclusive proof of the fact. We cannot but regret that that he was not acquainted with the following very interesting one, communicated to the editor by a lady of the highest respectability, who not only witnessed it herself, but it was also seen by several members of her own family. I will relate it in her own words:

"A pair of swallows built their nest early in the summer, close to the iron-stay of a water-spout, running in the direction from my bed-room window. I could observe their proceedings as I lay in bed, and also from various parts of my room. After the first hatch had taken flight, the parent birds repaired the nest and sat again. The young ones were brought to life in September, and were able, early in October, to leave the nest for the spout or the roof of the house. They took a short flight across the court, but were too weak to depart when the rest of these birds are supposed to quit our Island. Having taken great interest in watching these little birds, I was led to wonder how the young ones would manage, or whether they would be left to starve. To my great surprise I found the old birds carrying mud one morning, and most carefully closing the aperture of the nest upon the young ones who were then

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late hatchings more in favour of hiding than migration? Nay, some young martins remained in their nests last year so late as September the 29th; and yet they totally disappeared with us by the 5th of October.

How strange it is, that the swift, which seems to live exactly the same life with the swallow and house-martin, should leave us before the middle of August invariably! while the latter stay often till the middle of October; and once I saw numbers of house-martins on the 7th of November.* The martins and red-wing fieldfares were flying in sight together; an uncommon assemblage of summer and winter birds!

A little yellow bird† (it is either a species of the *alauda trivialis*, or rather, perhaps, of the *motacilla trochilus*) still continues to make a sibilous shivering noise in the tops of tall woods. The *stoparola* of Ray (for which we have as yet no name in these parts) is called, in your Zoology, the fly-catcher. There is one circumstance characteristic of this bird, which seems to have escaped observation; and that is, it takes its stand on the top of some stake, or post, from whence it springs forth on its prey, catching a fly in the air, and hardly ever touching the ground, but returning still to the same stand for many times together.‡

I perceive there are more than one species of the *motacilla*

in it. It was most effectually stopped. As the spring approached I diligently watched the little prisoners or rather their prison. Early in April I heard a slight twittering. This continued for some days, and I then inspected the nest and found a small hole about the size of a pea. This day by day increased, and at length three swallows emerged from their winter habitation. At first they appeared weak, but in a few days they gained strength, and after a flight always returned to the same place, and rested there during the night. The nest is still preserved. A brood has been hatched again this year, and another nest built on the next stay of the spout, nearer to my window."

It is curious that Mr. White and Mr. Daines Barrington, who were so strongly inclined in favour of the torpidity of swallows, should not have been able to bring forward one decided fact to prove their favourite idea.—Ed.

* This may be accounted for by the swifts having only one brood and when they can fly, both old and young migrate. The purpose for which they came to this country has been fulfilled.—Ed.

† It is the grasshopper-lark.—Ed.

‡ Nothing can be more graceful or pretty than the action of this bird in taking flies. I have seen the young seated in a row on a rail, and fed by their parents in succession, darting at flies as mentioned by Mr. White.—Ed.

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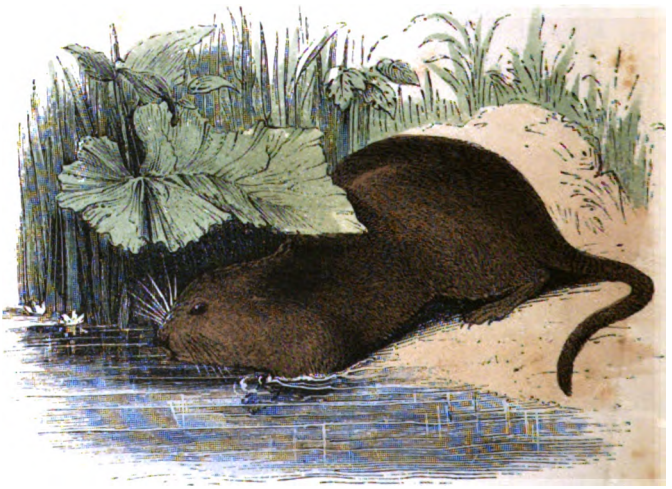

THE WATER RAT. (*Arvicola amphibia.*)

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*trochilus:* Mr. Derham supposes, in Ray's Philosophical Letters, that he has discovered three. In these, there is again an instance of some very common birds that have as yet no English name.

Mr. Stillingfleet makes a question whether the black-cap (*motacilla atracapilla*) be a bird of passage or not. I think there is no doubt of it; for in April, in the first fine weather, they come trooping all at once in these parts, but are never seen in the winter. They are delicate songsters.

Numbers of snipes* breed every summer in some moory ground on the verge of this parish. It is very amusing to see the cock bird on wing at that time, and to hear his piping and humming notes.

I have had no opportunity yet of procuring any of those mice which I mentioned to you in town. The person that brought me the last says they are plenty in harvest, at which time I will take care to get more; and will endeavour to put the matter out of doubt, whether it be a nondescript species or not.

I suspect much there may be two species of water-rats.† Ray says, and Linnæus after him, that the water-rat is web-footed behind. Now, I have discovered a rat on the banks of our little stream that is not web-footed, and yet is an excellent swimmer and diver: it answers exactly to the *mus amphibus* of Linnæus (see *Syst. Nat.*), which, he says, "*natat in fossi et urinatur*," "swims and dives in the water." I should be glad to procure one "*plantis palmatis*," "with webbed feet." Linnæus seems to be in a puzzle about his *mus amphibius*, "amphibious mouse," and to doubt whether it differs from his *mus terrestris*, "land mouse," which, if it be, as he allows, the "*mus agrestis capite grandi brachyuros*," "short-tailed, large-headed field-mouse," of Ray, is widely different from the water-rat, both in size, make, and manner of life.

* Bot snipes and woodcocks breed freely in the neighbourhood of Woolmer Forest. The latter have always four eggs, which are generally deposited on a dry bank. As soon as the eggs are hatched, the young are conveyed to wet swampy grounds. Sir Charles Taylor of Hollycombe, for many years past, has had a uple of young woodcocks on his table on the 25th of June.—Ed.

† Many persons in the neighbourhood of the river Thames have supposed that there are two varieties of water-rats. This has arisen from the circumstance of the common Norway rat having been seen swimming to the aits on the river, and attacking and destroying the water-rats.—Ed.

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As to the *falco*, which I mentioned in town, I shall take the liberty to send it down to you into Wales; presuming on your candour, that you will excuse me if it should appear as familiar to you as it is strange to me. Though mutilated, "*qualem dices . . . antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquiæ!*" "what would you say it was before, when such are the remains?"

It haunted a marshy piece of ground in quest of wild ducks and snipes; but, when it was shot, had just knocked down a rook, which it was tearing in pieces. I cannot make it answer to any of our English hawks; neither could I find any like it at the curious exhibition of stuffed birds in Spring Gardens. I found it nailed up at the end of a barn, which is the countryman's museum.

The parish I live in is a very abrupt uneven country, ful of hills and woods, and therefore full of birds.

## LETTER XI.

### TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *September* 9, 167.

IT will not be without impatience that I shall wait for your thoughts with regard to the *falco;* as to its weight, breadth, &c., I wish I had set them down at the time; but, to the best of my remembrance, it weighed two pounds and eight ounces, and measured, from wing to wing, thirty-eight inches. Its *cere* and feet were yellow, and the circle of its eyelids a bright yellow. As it had been killed some days, and the eyes were sunk, I could make no good observation on the colour of the pupils and the *irides*.

The most unusual birds I ever observed in these parts were a pair of hoopoes, (*upupa,*)* which came several years ago in the summer, and frequented an ornamental piece of

* A pair of hoopoes have bred for many years in an old ash tree on the grounds of a lady in Sussex near Chichester. Numbers of them are sold in the markets in Paris.—ED.

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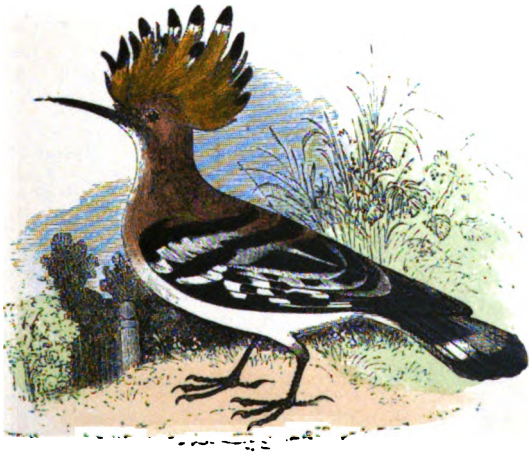

THE HOOPOE. (*Upupa epops.*)

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ground, which joins to my garden, for some weeks. They used to march about in a stately manner, feeding in the walks, many times in the day; and seemed disposed to breed in my outlet; but were frightened and persecuted by idle boys, who would never let them be at rest.*

Three grossbeaks (*loxia coccothraustes*) appeared some years ago in my fields, in the winter; one of which I shot. Since that, now and then, one is occasionally seen in the same dead season.†

A crossbill (*loxia curvirostra*) was killed last year in this neighbourhood.

Our streams, which are small, and rise only at the end of

* Specimens have been killed at different times in this country, and instances are even recorded of their having even bred; the species, however, can only be placed among our occasional visitants. The specimen from which the figure in Mr. Selby's elegant *Illustrations of British Ornithology* was drawn, was taken on the coast, near Bamborough Castle, Northumberland. Colonel Montague mentions a pair that began a nest in Hampshire, and Dr. Latham records a young hoopoe shot in the month of June. The species is abundantly met with in the south of Europe; it also occurs in Holland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. In the winter it retires to Asia or Africa, where it is also a permanent resident.—W. J.

One specimen was shot in the county of Dublin, and another in the county of Tipperary, in 1828. Loudon's *Magazine*.—W. J.

† This also can only be placed as an occasional visitant, appearing most frequently in the southern counties of England, during hard and stormy winters. Mr. White (as we learn from the *Naturalist's Calendar and Miscellaneous Observations*, published in a separate volume, since the author's decease, by Dr. Aikin, and to which we shall occasionally refer) met with this species at different times, and found it feeding on the stones of damson plums, that still remained on and about the trees in his garden. This species forms the type of the genus *coccothraustes*.—"On the 14th May, 1828, the nest of a hawfinch was taken in an orchard belonging to Mr. Waring, at Chelsfield, Kent. The old female was shot on the nest, which was of a slovenly loose form, and shallow, not being so deep as those of the greenfinch or linnet, and was placed against the large bough of an apple-tree, about ten feet from the ground. It was composed externally of dead twigs and a few roots, mixed with coarse white moss, or lichen, and lined with horse-hair and a little fine dried grass. The eggs were five in number, about the size of a skylark's, but shorter and rounder, and spotted with bluish ash and olive brown, some of the spots inclining to dusky or brackish brown. The markings were variously distributed on the different eggs." J. C. London, *Jour. of Nat. Hist.*—W. J.

They are by no means uncommon birds in this country. Many of them breed among the Horn-beam pollards in Epping and Waltham Forests.—Ed.

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the village, yield nothing but the bull's head, or miller's thumb (*gobius fluviatilis capitatus*),* the trout (*trutta fluviatilis*), the eel (*anguilla*),† the lampern (*lampœtra parva et fluviatilis*), and the stickle-back (*pisciculus aculeatus*).‡

We are twenty miles from the sea, and almost as many from a great river, and therefore see but little of sea birds. As to wild fowls, we have a few teams of ducks bred in the moors where the snipes breed; and multitudes of widgeons and teals, in hard weather, frequent our lakes in the forest.

Having some acquaintance with a tame brown owl, I find that it casts up the fur of mice and the feathers of birds in pellets, after the manner of hawks: when full, like a dog, it hides what it cannot eat.

The young of the barn-owl are not easily raised, as they want a constant supply of fresh mice; whereas the young of the brown owl will eat indiscriminately all that is brought; snails, rats, kittens, puppies, magpies, and any kind of carrion or offal.

The house-martins have eggs still, and squab young. The last swift I observed was about the 21st of August: it was a straggler.

Redstarts, fly-catchers, white-throats, and *reguli non cristati*, still appear; but I have seen no black-caps lately.

I forgot to mention, that I once saw in Christ Church College quadrangle, in Oxford, on a very sunny warm morning, a house-martin flying about and settling on the parapet, so late as the 20th of November.

* The miller's thumb is found in nearly every river and brook in England. It harbours under stones, which the flatness of its head enables it to do.—Ed.

† Mr. Yarrel, a most accurate and observant naturalist, in a number of the *Zoological Journal*, hints at the possibility of two species of eels being natives of this country. In this I certainly think Mr. Yarrel correct, their similarity rendering them easily confused. The species with which the London markets are supplied from Holland, may also be discovered, as our researches in the ichthyology of Great Britain, so long comparatively neglected, become more frequent. The grig of Pennant, which seems to be Mr. Yarrel's second species, appears in the Thames, at Oxford, at a different season from the common eel.—W. J.

There are three species of Eels in our fresh waters—the sharp and the broad-nosed eels and the Snig, which the editor had the pleasure of introducing to the notice of his friend, Mr. Yarrell.—Ed.

‡ There are six distinct kinds of sticklebacks.—Ed.

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At present, I know only two species of bats, the common *vespertilio murinus*, and the *vespertilio auribus*.*

I was much entertained last summer with a tame bat,† which would take flies out of a person's hand. If you gave

* Dr. Fleming, in his *Description of British Animals*, 1828, enumerates seven species included in the genera *rhinolophus*, or those having membrance upon the nose; *vespertilio*, including our common bat; and *plecotus*, those with large ears.—W. J.

There are from twenty to twenty-three varieties of bats found in this country. It is curious that so observant a naturalist as Mr. White should only know of two.—Ed.

† We are indebted to Mr. George Daniell for the following particulars of the habits of two species of British bats, which were kept by him in confinement. They were originally given to me as a commentary on the statement in the text; but were subsequently communicated, at my request, to the Zoological Society at its meeting on November 11, 1834.

"In July, 1833," Mr. Daniell says, "I received five specimens of the pipistrelle bat from Elvetham, Hants; all of which were pregnant females. There were many more congregated with them in the ruins of the barn in which they were taken; but the rest escaped. They were brought to me in a tin powder canister, in which they had been kept for several days; and on turning them loose into a common packing-case, with a few strips of deal nailed over its front to form a cage, they pleased me much by the great activity which they displayed in the larger space into which they had been introduced; progressing rapidly along the bottom of the box, ascending by the bars to the top, and then throwing themselves off as if endeavouring to fly. I caught some flies and offered one of them to one of the bats, which seized it with the greatest eagerness, and devoured it greedily, and then thrust its nose repeatedly through the bars, with its jaws extended, closing them from time to time, with a snap, and evincing the utmost anxiety to obtain an additional supply of this agreeable food. The flies were then offered to the whole of them, and the same ravenous disposition was displayed; all the bats crowding together at the end of the box at which they were fed, and crawling over, snapping at, and biting each other like so many curs, uttering at the same time a disagreeable grating squeak. I soon found that my pets were so hungry as to require more time to be expended in fly-catching than I was disposed to devote to them; and I then tried to feed them with cooked meat: but this they rejected. Raw beef was, however, eaten with avidity; and an evident preference was given to those pieces which had been moistened with water. The feeding with beef answered exceedingly well, two objects being gained by it: the bats were enabled to feed without assistance; and my curiosity was gratified by observing them catching flies for themselves.

"A slice of beef attached to the side of the box in which they were kept not only spared me the trouble of feeding them, but also, by attracting the flies, afforded good sport in observing the animals obtain their own food by this new kind of bat-fowling. The weather being warm, many blue-bottle flies were attracted by the meat; and on one of these approaching within range of the bats' wings, it was sure to be struck down by their action, the

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it anything to eat, it brought its wings round before the mouth, hovering and hiding its head in the manner of birds of prey when they feed. The adroitness it showed in shearing off the wings of the flies, which were always rejected,

animal itself falling at the same instant with all its membranes expanded, cowering over the devoted fly, with its head thrust under them in order to secure its prey. When the head was again drawn forth, the membranes were immediately closed and the fly was almost invariably taken by the head. The act of deglutition was a laboured operation: the mastication consisting of a succession of eager bites or snaps; and the sucking process, if I may so term it, by which the insect is drawn into the mouth, being greatly assisted by the loose lip of the animal. Several minutes were usually occupied in swallowing a large fly. Those which I offered in the first instance were eaten entire; but I subsequently observed detached wings in the bottom of the box in which the bats were kept; I never, however, observed the rejection of the wings by the bats, and am inclined to think that they are generally swallowed. The olfactory nerves of the pipistrelle are acutely sensible, readily distinguishing between an insect and a bit of beef; for when one of them has been hanging at rest, attached by its hinder extremities to one of the bars in front of its cage, I have frequently placed a small piece of beef within a short distance of its nose, but the beef has always been disregarded; when, on the other hand, I have put a fly in the same situation, the bat instantly commenced snapping after it. They would eat the beef when they were hungry, but they never refused a fly.

"In the day-time they sometimes clustered together in a corner of the cage. Towards evening they became very lively and gave rapid utterance to their harsh, creaking notes. The longest survivor of them died after a captivity of nineteen days.

"My intimate acquaintance with the noctule bat, the species of which Gilbert White appears to have been the first English observer, and for which he indicated the specific name *altivolans*, commenced on the 16th of May, 1834. I obtained on that day from Hertfordshire five specimens, four of which were pregnant females. The fifth individual, a male, was exceedingly restless and savage from the first; biting the females, and breaking his teeth against the wires of the cage in his attempts to escape from his place of confinement. He rejected all food, and died on the 18th. Up to this time the remaining four had continued sulky; but towards the evening they ate a few small pieces of raw beef, in preference to flies, beetles, or gentles, all of which were offered to them: only one, however, fed kindly. On the 20th, one died; and on the 22nd, two others. The survivor was tried with a variety of food, for I was anxious to preserve her as long as possible; and as she evinced a decided preference for the hearts, livers, &c. of fowls, she was fed constantly upon them. Occasionally I offered to her large flies, but they were always rejected; although one or two May chafers placed within her reach were partially eaten. In taking the food the wings are not thrown forward in the manner of the pipistrelle, as if to surround a victim and prevent its escape; the action of the noctule in seizing the meat was similar to that of a dog. The appetite was sometimes voracious; the quantity eaten exceeding half an

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THE BAT. (*Vespertilio noctula.*)

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was worthy of observation and pleased me much. Insects seemed to be most acceptable, though it did not refuse raw flesh when offered; so that the notion, that bats go down chimneys and gnaw men's bacon, seems no improbable story. While I amused myself with this wonderful quadruped, I saw it several times confute the vulgar opinion, that bats, when down on a flat surface, cannot get on the wing again, by rising with great ease from the floor. It ran, I observed, with more dispatch than I was aware of; but in a most ridiculous and grotesque manner.*

Bats drink on the wing, like swallows, by sipping the

ounce, although the weight of the animal was no more than ten drachms. It was in the evening that it came down to its food: throughout the day it remained suspended by its hinder extremies at the top of the cage. It lapped the water that drained from its food, and in this, no less than in its manner of feeding, there was a marked distinction between the noctule and the pipistrelle: the latter in drinking raises its head. The animal evidently became quite reconciled to her new position. She took considerable pains in cleaning herself, using the claws of the posterior extremities as a comb, parting with them the hair on either side from the head to the tail, and forming a straight line down the middle of the back: the membrane of the wings was cleaned by forcing the nose through the folds, and thereby expanding them.

"On the 23rd of June, a young one was born, exceeding in size a newly born mouse; and having, from its birth, considerable power in its hind legs and claws, by the aid of which it clung strongly to its dam or to the deal sides of the cage. It was nestled so closely within the folds of the membranes as to prevent any observation of the process of suckling. The dam was exceedingly careful of it the next day also, and was observed to shift it from side to side to suckle it, keeping it still folded in the membranes of the wings: on these occasions her usual position was reversed. In the evening she was found to be dead; but the young one was still alive. It took milk from a sponge, and was kept carefully wrapped up in flannel; and by these attentions was preserved for eight days, at the end of which period it died. Its eyes were not then opened, and it had acquired very little hair."

With the preceding notes, Mr. Bennett states that Mr. Daniell communicated to the Zoological Society some other particulars respecting the female noctule, which were published in the Proceedings of that body for 1834. These are less adapted to the general, than to the scientific, reader.

It would seem probable, from the account given in the text of its manner of feeding, that the tame bat observed by our author was the pipistrelle: a bat which he and British zoologists generally, until very recently, confounded with *Vespertilio murinus;* one of the most common, with one of the rarest of the English species.—E. T. B.

* In the West Indies, bats do great mischief in gardens, where they eat the green peas, opening the pod over each pea, and removing it very dexterously.—Ed.

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surface, as they play over pools and streams. They love to frequent waters, not only for the sake of drinking, but on account of insects, which are found over them in the greatest plenty. As I was going some years ago, pretty late, in a boat from Richmond to Sunbury, on a warm summer's evening, I think I saw myriads of bats between the two places; the air swarmed with them all along the Thames, so that hundreds were in sight at a time.

## LETTER XII.

TO THE SAME.

*November* 4, 1767.

SIR,—It gave me no small satisfaction to hear that the *falco** turned out an uncommon one. I must confess I should have been better pleased to have heard that I sent you a bird you had never seen before; but that I find would be a difficult task.

I have procured some of the mice mentioned in my former letters,—a young one, and a female with young, both of which I have preserved in brandy. From the colour, shape, size and manner of nesting, I make no doubt but that the species is nondescript. They are much smaller, and more slender, than the *mus domesticus medius* of Ray, and have more of the squirrel or dormouse colour. Their belly is white; a straight line along their sides divides the shades of their back and belly. They never enter into houses; are carried into ricks and barns with the sheaves; abound in harvest; and build their nests amidst the straws of the corn above the ground, and sometimes in thistles. They breed as many as eight in a litter, in a little round nest composed of the blades of grass or wheat.†

One of these nests I procured this autumn, most artifi-

* This hawk proved to be the *falco peregrinus*—a variety.

† We are indebted to Pallas for much information respecting these curious little animals, which he calls the *mus minutus*. He found them in the woods in many parts of Russia, and they have since been discovered in Germany. The nest is most elaborately constructed of the common reed, formed into a

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cially platted, and composed of blades of wheat; perfectly round, and about the size of a cricket-ball; with the aperture so ingeniously closed, that there was no discovering to what part it belonged. It was so compact and well filled that it would roll across the table without being discomposed, though it contained eight little mice that were naked and blind. As this nest was perfectly full, how could the dam come at her litter respectively, so as to administer a teat to each? Perhaps she opens different places for that purpose, adjusting them again when the business is over; but she could not possibly be contained herself in the ball with her young, which, moreover, would be daily increasing in bulk. This wonderful procreant cradle, an elegant instance of the efforts of instinct, was found in a wheat-field suspended in the head of a thistle.

ball about the size of a cricket-ball, and suspended on a plant about five inches from the ground: nine young mice have been found in one nest.

The Rev. W. Bingley also devoted much time and attention to them; he kept one in a cage for some time, and saw it lap water freely; it preferred insects to every other kind of food: it was very fond of bread; its appearance and movements were very elegant; its tail was prehensile, and generally coiled round a wire of the cage; its toes were very long and flexible, and it could grasp the wires with any one of them.

Mr. Bell, in his pleasing and instructive history of British Quadrupeds, says that the Harvest Mouse is not only one of the prettiest, but, without exception, the smallest of all the British mammalia; and that its habits are at least as interesting as those of many more conspicuous and important species. Although not easily rendered familiar, it may be kept in confinement for a long time in good health, by allowing it the optional use of a sort of little tread-wheel, in which it will often exercise itself, apparently to its amusement and satisfaction, and it was probably from the absence of this healthful exercise that persons have failed to keep it in confinement. This mouse, Mr. Bell adds, is found in various parts of England; in Hampshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Devonshire, and Cambridgeshire. It has also been found in Germany, and in Russia and Siberia.—Bell's *Quadrupeds.*

See also the seventh volume of the Linnæan Transactions, in which Colonel Montagu records his having seen this mouse in Wiltshire, before the discovery of it in Hampshire, by Mr. White.

In a review of Gilbert White's Selborne, in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1789, is the following paragraph with reference to his discovery of the Harvest Mouse:—

"Many would be surprised if they were told that a new quadruped had, within these few years, been found in this Island, yet Mr. White's researches have been rewarded with such a discovery. It is indeed the smallest four-footed animal we have, but its manner of life shows it to be endowed with equal sagacity with the larger kinds." The author's description of this mouse is there given in his own words.—Ed.

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A gentleman, curious in birds, wrote me word that his servant had shot one last January, in that severe weather, which he believed would puzzle me. I called to see it this summer, not knowing what to expect: but the moment I took it in hand, I pronounced it the male *garrulus bohemicus*, or German silk-tail, from the five peculiar crimson tags, or points which it carries at the ends of five of the short remiges. It cannot, I suppose, with any propriety, be called an English bird; and yet I see by Ray's *Philosophical Letters* that great flocks of them, feeding on haws, appeared in this kingdom in the winter of 1685.*

The mention of haws puts me in mind that there is a total failure of that wild fruit, so conducive to the support of many of the winged nation. For the same severe weather, late in the spring, which cut off all the produce of the more tender and curious trees, destroyed also that of the more hardy and common.

Some birds, haunting with the missel-thrushes, and feeding on the berries of the yew-tree, which answered to the description of the *merula torquata*, or ring-ousel, were lately seen in this neighbourhood. I employed some people to procure me a specimen, but without success. (See Letter VIII.)

*Query*—Might not Canary birds be naturalised to this climate, provided their eggs were put in the spring into the nests of their congeners, as goldfinches, greenfinches, &c.? Before winter, perhaps, they might be hardened, and able to shift for themselves.

About ten years ago, I used to spend some weeks yearly at Sunbury, which is one of those pleasant villages lying on the Thames, near Hampton Court. In the autumn I could not help being much amused with those myriads of the swallow kind which assemble in those parts. But what struck me most was, that from the time they began to congregate, forsaking the chimneys and houses, they roosted every night in the osier beds of the aits of that river.†

* The Bohemian Chatterer. In 1810, large flocks of this species were dispersed through various parts of the kingdom; and from that period, few appear to have visited the island, until February, 1822, when several occurred, and one was killed on the Calton Hill, Edinburgh. They appeared also during the severe storm of 1823, and several were killed in East Lothian last winter, (1828.)—W. J.

† Swallows, in countless numbers still assemble every autumn on the

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Now, this resorting towards that element, at that season of the year, seems to give some countenance to the northern opinion (strange as it is) of their retiring under water. A Swedish naturalist is so much persuaded of that fact, that he talks, in his *Calendar of Flora*, as familiarly of the swallow's going under water in the beginning of September, as he would of his poultry going to roost a little before sunset.

An observing gentleman in London writes me word, that he saw a house-martin,* on the 23rd of last October, flying in and out of its nest in the Borough; and I myself, on the 29th of last October, as I was travelling through Oxford, saw four or five swallows hovering round and settling on the roof of the County Hospital.†

willows growing on the aits of the river Thames. I have not only witnessed their departure, but also their arrival in this country. On the latter occasion they alighted on the ground and appeared much exhausted.—Ed.

* In a mild winter I have seen solitary swallows as late as the beginning of December.—Ed.

† In Mr. Bennett's edition of White's Selborne, there is a very interesting note of the late Dean of Manchester's (Mr. Herbert) on the instinct of birds. He says that young swifts, the moment they leave the nest, have often occasion to make the great migration, and that the various species of hirundines remain in their nests till they are more completely feathered than other birds. Thus when they come forth, they are matured for flight. He thinks that the troublesome insects which infest their nests (*hippobosca hirundinis*), are a resource in the scheme of Providence to force the young birds to venture upon the wing from the perilous height at which their nest is placed, by making the abode insupportable.

Each bird, Mr. Herbert says, builds its nest in the same form and of the same materials as its parent, and for the most part in a similar situation; but he thinks that, if the eggs were transposed into the nest of some nearly related species, and the produce kept separate from all others of their own kind, they would doubtless make their nests like those of the birds which had reared them, and would also adopt their notes. I have observed, he adds, young blackcaps raised from the nest in a large cage in which the perches were very low, as soon as they fed themselves show a sudden anxiety at roosting-time to find a higher perch, and flutter about so intent upon this as to notice nothing else, and at last settle to roost clinging to the wires near the top of the cage. This appears like a marvellous instinctive impulse; but I apprehend that, while in their native bush, they had noticed the parents every evening, at roosting-time, fly upwards to a loftier situation in which to pass the night. I therefore refer this to observation.

Amongst other notices of peculiar instincts, Mr. Herbert refers to that of young birds brought up in cages, selecting their proper food from amongst a variety placed before them, and also that of migratory birds washing, and



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Now, is it likely that these poor little birds, which perhaps had not been hatched but a few weeks, should, at that late season of the year, and from so midland a county, attempt a voyage to Goree or Senegal, almost as far as the equator?*

I acquiesce entirely in your opinion that, though most of the swallow kind may migrate, yet some do stay behind and hide with us during the winter.

As to the short-winged, soft-billed birds which come trooping in such numbers in the spring, I am at a loss even what to suspect about them. I watched them narrowly this year, and saw them abound till about Michaelmas, when they appeared no longer. Subsist they cannot openly among us and yet elude the eyes of the inquisitive; and as to their hiding, no man pretends to have found any of them in a torpid state in the winter. But with regard to their migration, what difficulties attend that supposition! that such feeble bad fliers, who the summer long never flit but from hedge to hedge, should be able to traverse vast seas and continents, in order to enjoy milder seasons amidst the regions of Africa.†

## LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 22, 1768.

SIR,—As in one of your former letters you expressed the more satisfaction from my correspondence on account of my living in the most southerly county; so now I may return

those which remain with us, dusting themselves. He thinks that this is a wise dispensation of the Great Creator; for if the little wren in winter were to wash in cold water instead of dusting, it would perish from the chill.

The result of these observations is that there are certain impulses given to birds, independent of their early imitative propensities, which seem to proceed directly from the Almighty Power that governs the universe. The more this subject is investigated, the more clearly will the direct agency of God be discovered.

* See Adanson's *Voyage to Senegal.*

† They not only traverse vast seas and continents, but they take their departure at night; for they have been found dead in lighthouses, having flown against the strong light.—ED.

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the compliment, and expect to have my curiosity gratified by your living much more to the north.

For many years past, I have observed, that towards Christmas vast flocks of chaffinches have appeared in the fields—many more, I used to think, than could be hatched in any one neighbourhood. But, when I came to observe them more narrowly, I was amazed to find that they seemed to me to be almost all hens.* I communicated my suspicions to some intelligent neighbours, who, after taking pains about the matter, declared that they also thought them mostly all females; at least fifty to one. This extraordinary occurrence brought to my mind the remark of Linnæus, that "before winter, all their hen chaffinches migrate through Holland into Italy." Now, I want to know from some curious person in the north, whether there are any large flocks of these finches with them in the winter, and of which sex they mostly consist? For, from such intelligence one might be able to judge whether our female flocks migrate from the other end of the island, or whether they come over to us from the continent.

We have, in the winter, vast flocks of the common linnets, more, I think, than can be bred in any one district. These, I observe, when the spring advances, assemble on some tree in the sunshine, and join all in a gentle sort of chirping, as if they were about to break up their winter quarters, and betake themselves to their proper summer homes. It is well known, at least, that the swallows and the fieldfares do congregate with a gentle twittering before they make their respective departures.

You may depend on it that the bunting, *emberiza miliaria*, does not leave this country in the winter. In January, 1767, I saw several dozens of them, in the midst of a severe frost, among the bushes on the downs near Andover: in our woodland enclosed districts it is a rare bird.†

* Cock chaffinches are found all the year through, although they probably make partial migrations. One is now feeding (January 5th) before my window, and as a boy I have constantly taken them when out batfowling.—Ed.

† Sir W. Jardine says, that, a proportion of the common buntings do not migrate; but we certainly receive a considerable number at the great general migration, at the commencement of winter, most probably from Sweden and Norway. They generally breed and frequent unenclosed countries, and assemble in flocks during winter.—Ed.



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Wagtails, both white and yellow,* are with us all the winter. Quails crowd to our southern coast, and are often killed in numbers by people that go on purpose.

Mr. Stillingfleet, in his *Tracts*, says, that "if the wheatear (*œnanthe*) does not quit England, it certainly shifts places; for, about harvest, they are not to be found where there was before great plenty of them." This well accounts for the vast quantities that are caught about that time on the south downs near Lewes,† where they are esteemed a delicacy. There have been shepherds, I have been credibly informed, that have made many pounds in a season by catching them in traps. And though such multitudes are taken, I never saw (and I am well acquainted with those parts) above two or three at a time; for they are never gregarious. They may perhaps migrate in general; and, for that purpose, draw towards the coast of Sussex in autumn; but that they do not all withdraw I am sure, because I see a few stragglers in many counties, at all times of the year, especially about warrens and stone quarries.

I have no acquaintance at present among the gentlemen of the navy, but have written to a friend, who was a sea chaplain in the late war, desiring him to look into his minutes, with respect to birds that settled on their rigging during their voyage up or down the Channel.‡ What Hasselquist says on that subject is remarkable; there were little short-winged birds frequently coming on board the ship all the way from our Channel quite up to the Levant, especially before squally weather.

What you suggest with regard to Spain is highly

* Wagtails certainly perform partial migrations. I lose sight of them in my neighbourhood for weeks together. A curious fact may here be related of them. A pair of pied wagtails built their nest last summer in a vacuum under a sleeper of the Brighton railway, near the terminus at that place. Trains at all times of the day were passing close to the nest, but in this situation the young were hatched and reared. A gentleman in the neighbourhood who watched the progress of the birds in their nidification, can vouch for the truth of this anecdote.—Ed.

† The Lewes shepherds here informed me that the wheatear has nearly forsaken their downs. I find it in Bushy-park all the year round, where they breed in the rabbit-burrows.—Ed.

‡ Many naval men have assured me of the fact of migratory birds settling on the rigging of their ships. Indeed the circumstance may now be considered as indisputable.—Ed.

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WHEAT-EAR AND WHIN-CHAT.

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probable. The winters of Andalusia are so mild, that, in all likelihood, the soft-billed birds that leave us at that season may find insects sufficient to support them there.

Some young man, possessed of fortune, health, and leisure, should make an autumnal voyage into that kingdom, and should spend a year there, investigating the natural history of that vast country. Mr. Willughby * passed through that kingdom on such an errand; but he seems to have skirted along in a superficial manner and an ill humour, being much disgusted at the rude dissolute manners of the people.

I have no friend left now at Sunbury to apply to about the swallows roosting on the aits of the Thames; nor can I hear any more about those birds which I suspected were *merulæ torquatæ*.

As to the small mice,† I have farther to remark, that

* See Ray's *Travels*, p. 466.

† The *mus messorius* of Shaw is the least of British quadrupeds. Mr. White has the merit of discovering it, and has added some interesting information regarding it in his different letters. The Rev. W. Bingley, in his *Memoirs of British Quadrupeds*, has the following very interesting remarks, illustrating the habits of an individual for some time kept alive in his possession:—"About the middle of September, 1804, I had a female harvest-mouse given to me. It was put into a dormouse cage immediately when caught, and a few days afterwards produced eight young ones. I entertained some hope that the little animal would have nursed these and brought them up; but, having been disturbed in her removal about four miles from the country, she began to destroy them, and I took them from her. The young ones, at the time I received them (not more than two or three days old), must have been at least equal in weight to the mother. After they were removed, she became reconciled to her situation; and when there was no noise, would venture to come out of her hiding-place at the extremity of the cage, and climb about among the wires of the open part, before me. In doing this, I remarked that her tail was prehensile, and that, to render her hold the more secure, she generally coiled the extremity of it round one of the wires. The toes of all the feet were particularly long and flexile, and she could grasp the wires very firmly with any of them. She frequently rested on her hind feet, somewhat in the manner of the jerboa, for the purpose of looking about her; and, in this attitude, could extend her body at such an angle as at first greatly surprised me. She was a beautiful little animal, and her various attitudes in cleaning her face, head, and body, with her paws, were particularly graceful and elegant. For a few days after I received this mouse, I neglected to give it any water; but when I afterwards put some into the cage, she lapped it with great eagerness. After lapping, she always raised herself on her hind feet, and cleaned her head with her paws. She continued, even till the time of her death, exceedingly shy and timid; but whenever I put into the cage any

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though they hang their nests for breeding up amidst the straws of the standing corn, above the ground, yet I find that, in the winter, they burrow deep in the earth, and make warm beds of grass; but their grand rendezvous seems to be in corn-ricks, into which they are carried at harvest. A neighbour housed an oat-rick lately, under the thatch of which were assembled near a hundred, most of which were taken; and some I saw. I measured them, and found that, from nose to tail, they were just two inches and a quarter,

favourite food, such as grains of wheat or maize, she would eat them before me. On the least noise or motion, however, she immediately ran off, with the grains in her mouth, to her hiding-place. One evening, as I was sitting at my writing-desk, and the animal was playing about in the open part of its cage, a large blue fly happened to buzz against the wires; the little creature, although at twice or thrice the distance of her own length from it, sprang along the wires with the greatest agility, and would certainly have seized it, had the space betwixt the wires been sufficiently wide to have admitted her teeth or paws to reach it. I was surprised at this occurrence, as I had been led to believe that the harvest mouse was merely a granivorous animal. I caught the fly, and made it buzz in my fingers against the wires. The mouse, though usually shy and timid, immediately came out of her hiding-place, and running to the spot, seized and devoured it. From this time I fed her with insects whenever I could get them; and she always preferred them to every other kind of food that I offered her. When this mouse was first put into her cage, a piece of fine flannel was folded up into the dark part of it as a bed, and I put some grass and bran into the large open part. In the course of a few days, all the grass was removed; and, on examining the cage, I found it very neatly arranged between the folds of the flannel, and rendered more soft by being mixed with the nap of the flannel, which the animal had torn off in considerable quantity for the purpose. The chief part of this operation must have taken place in the night; for although the mouse was generally awake and active during the daytime, yet I never once observed it employed in removing the grass. On opening its nest about the latter end of October, 1804, I remarked that there were, among the grass and wool at the bottom, about forty grains of maize. These appeared to have been arranged with some care and regularity, and every grain had the corcule, or growing part, eaten out, the lobes only being left. This seemed so much like an operation induced by the instinctive propensity that some quadrupeds are endowed with, for storing up food for support during the winter months, that I soon afterwards put into the cage about a hundred additional grains of maize. These were all in a short time carried away, and, on a second examination, I found them stored up in the manner of the former. But though the animal was well supplied with other food, and particularly with bread, which it seemed very fond of; and although it continued perfectly active through the whole winter, on examining its nest a third time, about the end of November, I observed that the food in its repository was all consumed, except about half-a-dozen grains."—W. J.

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THE MOUSE.

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and their tails just two inches long. Two of them, in a scale, weighed down just one copper halfpenny, which is about the third of an ounce avoirdupois; so that I suppose they are the smallest quadrupeds in this island. A full-grown *mus modius domesticus* weighs, I find, one ounce lumping weight, which is more than six times as much as the mouse above, and measures, from nose to rump, four inches and a quarter, and the same in its tail. We have had a very severe frost and deep snow this month. My thermometer was one day fourteen degrees and a half below the freezing point, within doors. The tender evergreens were injured pretty much. It was very providential that the air was still, and the ground well covered with snow, else vegetation in general must have suffered prodigiously. There is reason to believe that some days were more severe than any since the year 1739-40.*

## LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *March* 12, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—If some curious gentleman would procure the head of a fallow deer and have it dissected, he would find it furnished with two spiracula, or breathing-places,* besides the nostrils; probably analogous to the *puncta lachrymalia*, "lachrymal ducts," † in the human head. When deer are thirsty, they plunge their noses, like some horses, very deep under water, while in the act of drinking, and continue them in that situation for a considerable time; but, to obviate any inconveniency, they can open two vents, one at the inner corner of each eye, having a communication with the nose. Here seems to be an extraordinary provision of nature worthy our attention, and which has not,

* See Letter LXI.

† The slits beneath the eyes of deer are certainly to facilitate breathing, as all keepers know. The separation of the nerves and blood vessels on the cheeks of deer does not affect the horns in any great degree, or even the cutting of the spermatic cord. Any injury, however, to the testicles in all cases either retards or alters the growth of the horns.—ED.

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that I know of, been noticed by any naturalist. For it looks as if these creatures would not be suffocated, though both their mouths and nostrils were stopped. This curious formation of the head may be of singular service to beasts of chase, by affording them free respiration; and no doubt these additional nostrils are thrown open when they are hard run.* Mr. Ray observed that at Malta, the owners

* In answer to this account, Mr. Pennant sent me the following curious and pertinent reply:—"I was much surprised to find in the antelope something analogous to what you mention as so remarkable in deer. This animal also has a long slit beneath each eye, which can be opened and shut at pleasure. On holding an orange to one, the creature made as much use of those orifices as of his nostrils, applying them to the fruit, and seeming to smell it through them."

[The structure of the glandular cavities, of which the orifices are here alluded to, precludes the possibility of their ever being used as accessory respiratory passages, or organs of scent.

The common integument is continued over the margins of the orifice, and is reflected over the whole of the interior of the cavity, which is altogether imperforate, except by the ducts of a large flattened mucous gland, which occupies its base; a few short hairs spring up in the interspaces of the terminal orifices of the ducts. Mr. Hunter, whose attention was probably called by his friend Pennant to this peculiarity of the deer and antelopes, has left several preparations of the glands and sinus, taken from the Indian and another species of antelope, and also from the deer; in which their condition as tegumentary sacs, having no communication with the nose, is clearly shown.

Conceiving that the secretion of these glands, when rubbed upon projecting bodies, might serve to direct individuals of the same species to each other, I prepared a tabular view of the relations between the habits and habitats of the several species of antelopes, and their suborbital, maxillary, post-auditory, and inguinal glands, in order to be able to compare the presence and degrees of development of the glands, with the gregarious and other habits of the antelope tribe.

From this table it was, however, evident, that there is no relation between the gregarious habits of the antelopes which frequent the plains and the presence of the suborbital and maxillary sinuses; since these, besides being altogether wanting in some of the gregarious species, are present in many of the solitary frequenters of rocky mountainous districts. The supposition, therefore, that the secretion might serve, when left on shrubs or stones, to guide a straggler to the general herd, falls to the ground.

The secretion of those cutaneous glands which are designed to attract the sexes, is generally observed to acquire towards the reproductive period a strong musky odour, as in the elephant and alligator; but the secretion of the suborbital sinuses, even when these are most fully developed, is devoid of any approach to a musky, or any other well defined odour.

Nevertheless, the subjoined observations of Mr. Bennett tend to give some probability to the theory which ascribes to the suborbital sinuses a sexual relation.—R. O.]

[It seems probable that these organs, on the use of which it is by no means

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slit up the nostrils of such asses as were hard worked; for they, being naturally strait or small, did not admit air sufficient to serve them when they travelled or laboured in that hot climate. And we know that grooms and gentlemen of

creditable to naturalists to have now to speculate, may be designed for the promotion of that intimate acquaintance between animals of the same species which a primary law of nature requires; but it would be difficult to explain in what manner they may avail to such an end. That they have some connection with the full development of the animal powers will appear, I think, from the consideration of a series of individuals now living at the Zoological Society's Gardens.

Among the whole of the deer and antelopes that are provided with suborbital sinuses, none have them more strongly marked than the Indian antelope; and in none of those animals are they more frequently brought into use. A fully grown male, the moment you approach him, throws back his head, and thrusts himself rapidly forwards, as though about to make an attack; but the backward direction of his long spirally twisted horns, and the freedom with which he offers to you his exposed neck and chest, are scarcely indicative of a hostile movement. He has at this time fully expanded the large bag beneath his eye; its thick lips, which pout considerably in the quiet state of the animal, are widely separated and thrown back; and the intervening space is actually everted, the base of the sac forming a projection instead of a hollow. We see the bare skin, covered only by a coating of a dark ceruminous secretion. This, if the hand be within his reach, the animal attempts to rub against the knuckles; and we then feel that, though the lining skin of the sac has no general covering of hair, it is not destitute of a few bristles, which grate against the finger subjected to the friction. The friction is evidently agreeable to the animal, for it is often repeated; at times, it is even continued for a minute or two. After the finger has been subjected for some time to this rubbing, it will be found to have acquired a heavy odour of a salt and peculiar character.

The Zoological Society has at present, in its gardens in the Regent's Park, four individuals of the Indian antelope: an adult and aged male, brought by Col. Sykes from Bombay, and presented to the Society nearly five years ago; a younger, yet adult, male that was presented in an immature condition, about two years since; an immature male lately arrived, and in about the same state of development as that in which the last-mentioned individual was when he was originally presented; and an emasculated specimen of full growth. The series is singularly complete as regards one sex; the other sex has not yet been possessed by the society, and is, indeed, rarely seen in Europe. Destitute of horns, and never acquiring the rich deep colour of the males, the female is probably considered as less worthy of exportation from the native country of the species.

During the time that the old male has remained in the Gardens, he has constantly behaved in the manner described above; the conduct of his several predecessors has been precisely similar. He widely expands the suborbital sinus, and brings it near to any substance offered to him; he might even be suspected of a disposition to test, by some special sense lodged in it, the nature of the substance offered: but he usually drives the naked and everted skin

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the turf, think large nostrils necessary, and a perfection, in hunters and running horses.

Oppian, the Greek poet, by the following line, seems to have had some notion that stags have four spiracula:—

> Τετράδυμοι ῥινὲς, πίσυρες πνοίῃσι δίαυλοι.
> "Quadupartite nostrils, four respiratory passages."
> OPP. *Cyn.* Lib. ii. l. 181.

Writers, copying from one another, make Aristotle say,

against the hand, either thrusting it repeatedly, or rubbing it. The peculiar odour is freely imparted to the substance rubbed, but seems to offer no special attraction to his senses: he neither smells to it remarkably, nor licks it. The second male, whose horns have about three-fourths of their full growth, and whose rich colours are only less deep than those of his more aged neighbour, acts in a similar manner. His suborbital sinus, though strongly developed, is not so extensive as that of the older animal: in its quiet state it is scarcely completely closed, so thick are its lips; in its condition of excitement it is widely expanded. The animal then thrusts it at the offered hand; but does not exhibit an equal readiness to rub it. The youngest male is evidently immature; its horns have only commenced making their first spiral turn, and its colour is the fawn of the female, with her pale stripe along the side: for in the Indian antelope, as in most animals in which the adult males differ in colour from the females, the young of both sexes are similarly coloured and resemble the dam. In this individual the suborbital sinus is small; its lips are closely applied to each other; and they are but slightly moved when the animal is interested; if he uses his nose, the sac is called into moderate action. He cares little for the odour of his older relatives. The remaining specimen was probably of nearly the same age with this younger male when that occurred which, while it allowed of the animal's increasing in bulk, checked the development of the external characters that belong to the mature male. Its advance towards perfection was arrested while the female livery of the young animal was yet retained, and its colour is the fawn of the female with the side marked lengthways by her paler line. Its horn too, normal in its character, as far as a point corresponding with the early part of the first spiral turn, and about this point regularly ringed, afterwards loses the form characteristic of the species, and instead of being completed by a continuous series of spiral turns, surrounded by strongly marked rings, becomes smooth, continues slender, and is directed backwards in one single large sweep, forming a horn altogether monstrous, and one which is sheep-like, though infinitely weak, rather than antelopine: only one such horn remains. In this animal the suborbital sinus is not more developed than in the youngest and immature male, and it is quite unused: the sinus is little more than a mark existing in the ordinary situation, and no motion whatever is observed in its lips; it is not applied to any substance brought near to it, the nose being usually employed. A finger loaded with the secretion from the sac of the mature male is smelt to by this individual, and is then freely licked; perhaps on account of its saltness alone, but probably

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THE WEASEL. (*Mustela vulgaris.*)

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that goats breathe at their ears, whereas he asserts just the contrary:—Ἀλκμαίων γὰρ οὐκ ἀληθῆ λέγει, φάμενος ἀναπνεῖν τὰς αἰγας κὰτὰ τα ὠτά. "Alcmæon does not advance what is true, when he avers that goats breathe through their ears."—*History of Animals*, Book i. chap. xi.

## LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *March* 30, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—Some intelligent country people have a notion that we have, in these parts, a species of the genus *mustelinum*, besides the weasel, stoat, ferret, and polecat; a little reddish beast, not much bigger than a field mouse, but much longer, which they call a *cane*. This piece of intelligence can be little depended on; but farther inquiry may be made.*

also on account of some other and peculiar attraction. The same cause which induced the retention by this individual of the immature colours, and which arrested the perfect growth of the horns, has also, I do not hesitate in believing, checked the development of the suborbital sinuses and rendered them useless.

I am not disposed, on this occasion, to enter farther into the speculations which might be founded on the facts just recorded with respect to the suborbital sinus in the Indian antelope; and I quit the subject, for the present, with the remark that they seem to me to justify the observation with which I commenced. More numerous facts, and more full consideration of them, will determine before long the degree of value that should be attached to this view of the subject.

By a letter which I have just received from Mr. Hodgson, I find that he has had his attention excited by the observation of the antelopes which he has kept alive in Nepaul; and that he also has been led to the conclusion that there exists a relation between these sinuses and their secretions and the other functions referred to. His continued observation, favourably as he is circumstanced for the acquisition of information on all subjects of Nepaulese zoology, will doubtless tend to elucidate this yet unsettled point, on which Dr. Jacob, at the meeting of the British Association in Dublin, in 1835, laid before the members assembled some valuable observations.—E. T. B.]

* The *cane* is the common weasel. It is the provincial name for it.—ED.

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A gentleman in this neighbourhood had two milk-white rooks in one nest. A booby of a carter, finding them before they were able to fly, threw them down and destroyed them, to the regret of the owner, who would have been glad to have preserved such a curiosity in his rookery. I saw the birds myself nailed against the end of a barn, and was surprised to find that their bills, legs, feet, and claws, were milk-white.*

A shepherd saw, as he thought, some white larks on a down above my house this winter: were not these the *emberiza nivalis*, the snow-flake of the Brit. Zool.? No doubt they were.

A few years ago, I saw a cock bullfinch in a cage, which had been caught in the fields after it was come to its full colours. In about a year it began to look dingy, and blackening every succeeding year, it became coal-black at the end of four. Its chief food was hempseed. Such influence has food on the colour of animals! The pied and mottled colours of domesticated animals are supposed to be owing to high, various, and unusual food.†

I had remarked for years, that the root of the cuckoo-pint (*arum*) was frequently scratched out of the dry banks of hedges, and in severe snowy weather. After observing, with some exactness, myself, and getting others to do the same, we found it was the thrush kind that scratched it out. The root of the *arum* is remarkably warm and pungent.

Our flocks of female chaffinches have not yet forsaken us. The blackbirds and thrushes are very much thinned down by that fierce weather in January.

* Mr. Yarrell informs us that white, pied, and cream-coloured varieties of the rook occasionally occur. I have seen three white blackbirds from one nest, at Blackheath. Also, a white sparrow and a cream-coloured woodcock killed in Sussex.—Ed.

† Mr. White has justly remarked, that food has great influence on the colour of animals. The dark colour in wild birds is a great safeguard to them against their enemies; and this is the reason that, among birds of bright plumage, the young do not assume their gay colours till the second or third year, as the cygnet, the gold and silver pheasants, &c. The remarkable change of plumage among the gull tribe, is a curious and intricate subject. Is the circumstance mentioned by Mr. Pegge true, "that butterflies partake of the colour of the flowers they feed on?" I think not. See *Anonymiana*, p. 469.—Mitford.

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In the middle of February, I discovered in my tall hedges, a little bird that raised my curiosity; it was of that yellow-green colour that belongs to the *salicaria* kind, and, I think, was soft-billed. It was no *parus*, and was too long and too big for the golden-crowned wren, appearing most like the largest willow-wren. It hung sometimes with its back downwards, but never continuing one moment in the same place. I shot at it, but it was so desultory that I missed my aim.

I wonder that the stone curlew, *charadrius oedicnemus*, should be mentioned by the writers as a rare bird; it abounds in all the champaign parts of Hampshire and Sussex, and breeds, I think, all the summer, having young ones, I know, very late in the autumn. Already they begin clamouring in the evening. They cannot, I think, with any propriety be called, as they are by Mr. Ray, "*circa aquas versantes;*" for with us (by day at least) they haunt only the most dry, open, upland fields and sheepwalks, far removed from water: what they may do in the night I cannot say. Worms are their usual food, but they also eat toads and frogs.

I can show you some good specimens of my new mice. Linnæus, perhaps, would call the species *mus minimus*.

## LETTER XVI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *April* 18, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—The history of the stone curlew, *charadrius oedicnemus*, is as follows: It lays its eggs, usually two, never more than three, on the bare ground, without any nest, in the field, so the countryman in stiring his fallows, often destroys them. The young run immediately from the egg like partridges, &c., and are withdrawn to some flinty field by the dam, where they skulk among the stones, which are their best security; for their feathers are so exactly of the colour of our grey spotted flints, that the most exact ob-

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server, unless he catches the eye of the young bird, may be eluded. The eggs are short and round, of a dirty white, spotted with dark bloody blotches. Though I might not be able, just when I pleased, to procure you a bird, yet I could show you them almost any day; and any evening you may hear them round the village; for they make a clamour which may be heard a mile. *Œdicnemus* is a most apt and expressive name for them, since their legs seem swollen like those of a gouty man. After harvest, I have shot them before the pointers in turnip fields.

I make no doubt but there are three species of the willow-wrens; two I know perfectly, but have not been able yet to procure the third.* No two birds can differ more in their notes, and that constantly, than those two that I am acquainted with; for the one has a joyous, easy, laughing note, the other a harsh loud chirp. The former is every way larger, and three-quarters of an inch longer, and weighs two drachms and a half, while the latter weighs but two; so that the songster is one-fifth heavier than the chirper. The chirper (being the first summer bird of passage that is heard, the wryneck sometimes excepted) begins his notes in the middle of March, and continues them through the spring and summer, till the end of August, as appears by

* Mr. White clearly distinguishes three species of these little birds; and he seems to have had some idea of a fourth: but on this point there is a confusion in the entries in the Naturalist's Calendar, which has perhaps arisen from his having used different names for the same bird in noting down his observations in different years. The small uncrested wren of the calendar, appearing on the 9th of March, is called in the Natural History, p. 84, the chirper, and is said to have black legs: it must be either *sylvia rufa* or *sylv. loquax;* I believe the former, for I doubt the fact of *sylv. loquax,* the chiffchaff, which seems not to reach the north of England, arriving so early. The third entry in the Calendar, second willow or laughing wren, is certainly *sylv. trochilus;* because he says in the Natural History, p. 82, that the songster has a laughing note. The fourth entry, large shivering wren, is unquestionably *sylv. sylvicola.* It appears to me that the second and fifth entries, middle yellow wren, and middle willow wren, mean the same thing as second willow wren, and refer alike to *sylv. trochilus;* but it is possible that at a later period than the date of Letter XIX. written in 1768, he may have suspected the existence of a fourth species.—W. H.

There has hitherto existed very great confusion in the works of British and foreign naturalists concerning the four nearly allied species of wrens, which Mr. W. Herbert has satisfactorily cleared up in his very elaborate note on the subject, printed in Bennett's edition.—Ed.

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my journals. The legs of the larger of these two are flesh-coloured; of the less, black.

The grasshopper lark began his sibilous note in my fields last Saturday.* Nothing can be more amusing than the whisper of this little bird, which seems to be close by, though at an hundred yards' distance; and, when close at your ear, is scarce any louder than when a great way off. Had I not been a little acquainted with insects, and known that the grasshopper kind is not yet hatched, I should have hardly believed but that it had been a *locusta* whispering in the bushes. The country people laugh when you tell them that it is the note of a bird. It is a most artful creature, skulking in the thickest part of a bush, and will sing at a yard distance, provided it be concealed. I was obliged to get a person to go on the other side of the hedge where it haunted; and then it would run, creeping like a mouse before us for an hundred yards together, through the bottom of the thorns; yet it would not come into fair sight; but in a morning early, and when undisturbed, it sings on the top of a twig, gaping and shivering with its wings. Mr. Ray himself had no knowledge of this bird, but received his account from Mr. Johnson, who apparently confounds it with the *reguli non cristati*, from which it is very distinct. See Ray's *Philos. Letters*, p. 108.

The fly-catcher (*stoparola*) has not yet appeared: it usually breeds in my vine. The redstart begins to sing: its note is short and imperfect, but is continued till about the middle of June. The willow-wrens (the smaller sort) are horrid pests in a garden, destroying the pease, cherries, currants, &c., and are so tame that a gun will not scare them.†

* *Sylvia locustella. Lath.* Grasshopper-warbler.—Selby's *Ornith.*—W. J.

† This sentence has probably been the cause of the murder of numbers of these most innocent little birds, which are in truth peculiarly the gardener's friends. My garden men were in the habit of catching the hens on their nests in the strawberry beds, and killing them, under the impression that they made great ravage among the cherries; yet I can assert that they never taste the fruit, nor can those which are reared from the nest in confinement be induced to touch it. They peck the *aphides* which are injurious to the fruit trees; and being very pugnacious little birds, I have sometimes seen them take post in a cherry-tree, and drive away every bird that attempted to enter it, though of greater size and strength.

The birds which are mistaken for them are the young of the garden-warbler,

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*A List of the Summer Birds of Passage discovered in this neighbourhood, ranged somewhat in the order in which they appear.*

| | LINNÆI NOMINA. |
|---|---|
| Smallest willow-wren, | *Motacilla trochilus.* |
| Wryneck, | *Jynx torquilla.* |
| House-swallow, | *Hirundo rustica.* |
| Martin, | *Hirundo urbica.* |
| Sand-martin, | *Hirundo riparia.* |
| Cuckoo, | *Cuculus canorus.* |
| Nightingale, | *Motacilla luscinia.* |
| Blackcap, | *Motacilla atricapilla.* |
| White-throat, | *Motacilla sylvia.* |
| Middle willow-wren, | *Motacilla trochilus.* |
| Swift, | *Hirundo apus.* |
| Stone curlew? | *Charadrius œdicnemus?* |
| Turtle-dove? | *Turtur aldrovandi?* |
| Grasshopper lark, | *Alauda trivialis.* |
| Landrail, | *Rallus crex.* |
| Largest willow-wren, | *Motacilla trochilus.* |
| Redstart, | *Motacilla phœnicurus.* |
| Goatsucker, or fern-owl, | *Caprimulgus europæus.* |
| Fly-catcher, | *Muscicapa grisola.* |

My countrymen talk much of a bird that makes a clatter with its bill against a dead bough or some old pales, calling it a jar-bird. I procured one to be shot in the very fact; it proved to be the *sitta europæa* (the nuthatch). Mr. Ray

*curruca hortensis*, Bechst., with which Mr. White was not acquainted, as it is not mentioned by him, and does not appear in his list of summer birds; yet I am confident that they will be found plentifully at Selborne, when the Kentish cherries are ripe. They attacked my cherries in great numbers when I lived in the south of Berkshire, not much more than twenty miles from Selborne. These young birds have a strong tinge of yellow on the sides, which disappears after they moult, and gives them very much the appearance of the yellow wren when seen upon the tree, though they are larger and stouter, and in habits very much resemble the blackcaps, with whom they are associated in the plunder of cherry-trees. I have never seen the pettychaps in Yorkshire until the cherries are ripe, when they immediately make their appearance and attack the Kentish cherry particularly, being so greedy that I have often taken them with a fishing-rod tipped with birdlime, while they were pulling at the fruit. The moment they have finished the last Kentish cherry, they disappear for the season. If they finish the cherries in the morning, they are gone before noon. I am persuaded that they appear and disappear in the same manner at Selborne, and are probably to be found there only while the cherries are ripe, which accounts for Mr. White's having mistaken them for yellow wrens when he saw them in the fruit trees. They breed in the market gardens about London,

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says, that the less spotted woodpecker does the same. This noise may be heard a furlong or more.*

Now is the only time to ascertain the short-winged summer birds: for, when the leaf is out, there is no making

and I imagine that as the cherries ripen they migrate from garden to garden in pursuit of them. I am told that near London they remain late enough to attack the elder-berries, of which the fruit-eating warblers are very fond, but in Yorkshire they do not even wait for the later cherries. The number of these visitants depends upon the crop of early cherries. This year the crop having nearly failed, I saw but two of them, which appeared on the 15th of July, and were not seen after the 17th. The blackcap remains eating the currants and honeysuckle berries; they are both very fond in confinement of ripe pears, and I believe, in the south of England, they peck some of them before their departure.—W. H.

* The nuthatch, *sitta europæa*, Linn. is the only species of the genus inhabiting Europe; in this country it appears confined to England, never having been traced further north than Northumberland. The following animated sketch, a good deal in the style of our author, I have extracted from Loudon's *Journal of Natural History*, as giving a correct idea of the manners of this curious species:—"I had never seen the little bird called the nuthatch, when one day, whilst I was expecting the transit of some wood-pigeons under a birch-tree, with my gun in my hand, I observed a little ash-coloured bird squat himself on one of the large lateral trunks over my head, and after some observation, begin to tap loudly, or rather solidly, upon the wood, and then proceed round and round the branch, it being clearly the same thing to him whether his nadir or zenith were uppermost. I shot, and the bird fell; there was a lofty hedge between us, and when I got over, he had removed himself. It was some time before I secured him; and I mention this, because the manner in which he eluded me was characteristic of his cunning. He concealed himself in holes at the bottom of a ditch, so long as he heard the noise of motion; and when all was still, he would scud out and attempt to escape. A wing was broken, and I at length got hold of him. He proved small, but very fierce, and his bite would have made a child cry out. The elbow joint of his wing being thoroughly shattered, and finding that he had no other wound, I cut off the dangling limb, and put him into a large cage with a common lark. The wound did not in the least diminish his activity, nor yet his pugnacity, for he instantly began to investigate all means of escape; he tried the bores, then tapped the woodwork of the cage, and produced a knocking sound which made the room re-echo; but after finding his efforts vain, he then turned upon the lark, ran under him with his gaping beak to bite, and effectually alarmed his far more gentle and elegant antagonist. Compelled to separate them, the nuthatch—for this bird I discovered him to be, by turning over the leaves of an Ornithologia—was put into a smaller cage of plain oak wood and wire. Here he remained all night, and the next morning his knocking, or tapping with his beak, was the first sound I heard, though sleeping in an apartment divided from the other by a landing-place. He had food given to him, minced chicken and bread crumbs, and water. He ate and drank with a most perfect impudence, and the moment he had satisfied himself,



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any remarks on such a restless tribe; and, when once the young begin to appear, it is all confusion; there is no distinction of genus, species, or sex.

In breeding time, snipes play over the moors, piping and humming; they always hum as they are descending. Is not their hum ventriloquous, like that of the turkey? Some suspect that it is made by their wings.

turned again to his work of battering the frame of his cage, the sound from which, both in loudness and prolongation of noise, is only to be compared to the efforts of a fashionable footman, upon a fashionable door, in a fashionable square. He had a particular fancy for the extremities of the corner pillars of the cage; on these he spent his most elaborate taps, and, at this moment, though he only occupied the cage a day, the wood is pierced and worn like a piece of old worm-eaten timber. He probably had an idea, that if these main-beams could once be penetrated, the rest of the superstructure would fall, and free him. Against the doorway he had also a particular spite, and once succeeded in opening it; and when, to interpose a further obstacle, it was tied in a double knot with a string, the perpetual application of his beak quickly unloosed it. In ordinary cages, a circular hole is left in the wire for the bird to insert his head to drink from a glass; to this hole the nuthatch constantly repaired, not for the purpose of drinking, but to try to push out more than his head; but in vain, for he is a thick bird and rather heavily built; but the instant he found the hole too small, he would withdraw his head, and begin to dig and hammer at the circle, where it is rooted in the wood, with his pick-axe of a beak, evidently with a design to enlarge the orifice. His labour was incessant, and he ate as largely as he worked; and, I fear, it was the united efforts of both that killed him. His hammering was peculiarly laborious; for he did not peck as other birds do, but, grasping his hold with his immense feet, he turned upon them as upon a pivot, and struck with the whole weight of his body; thus assuming the appearance, with his entire form, of the head of a hammer; or, as I have sometimes seen birds in mechanical clocks, made to strike the hour by swinging on a wheel. We were in hopes that when the sun went down, he would cease from his labours and rest; but no. At the interval of every ten minutes, up to nine or ten in the night, he resumed his knocking, and strongly reminded us of the coffin-maker's nightly and dreary occupation. It was said by one of us, 'he is nailing his own coffin;' and so it proved. An awful fluttering in the cage, now covered with a handkerchief, announced that something was wrong: and we found him at the bottom of his prison, with his feathers ruffled and nearly all turned back. He was taken out, and for some time he lingered away in convulsions, and occasional brightenings up. At length he drew his last gasp: and will it be believed, that tears were shed on his demise? The fact is, that the apparent intelligence of his character, the speculation in his eye, the assiduity of his labour, and his most extraordinary fearlessness and familiarity, though coupled with fierceness, gave us a consideration for him that may appear ridiculous to those who have never so nearly observed the ways of an animal as to feel interested in its fate. With us it was different."—W. J.

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This morning I saw the golden-crowned wren,* whose crown glitters like burnished gold. It often hangs like a titmouse, with its back downwards.

## LETTER XVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *June* 18, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—On Wednesday last arrived your agreeable letter of June the 10th. It gives me great satisfaction to find that you pursue these studies still with such vigour, and are in such forwardness with regard to reptiles and fishes.

The reptiles, few as they are, I am not acquainted with so well as I could wish, with regard to their natural history. There is a degree of dubiousness and obscurity attending the propagation of this class of animals something analagous to that of the *cryptogamia* in the sexual system of plants; and the case is the same with regard to some of the fishes, as the eel, &c.

The method in which toads procreate and bring forth, seems to be very much in the dark. Some authors say that they are viviparous; and yet Ray classes them among his oviparous animals, and is silent with regard to the manner of their bringing forth. Perhaps they may be ἔσω μὲν ὠοτόκοι, ἔξω δὲ ζωοτόκοι, as is known to be the case with the viper.†

The copulation of frogs (or at least the appearance of it—for Swammerdam proves that the male has no *penis intrans*)

* It is surprising that this feeble diminutive bird should brave our severest winters.—ED.

† Toads are oviparous. Mr. Bell of London, a zealous ophiologist, has lately confirmed the fact recorded by Schneider, that toads devour the skin which they shed. In one instance, he witnessed the whole process of the shedding of the cuticle: it became divided longitudinally along the back and the abdomen; by the action of the hinder leg on one side, the skin was detached as far as the fore-leg; the same operation was next effected on the other side. The loosened *exuviæ* were then drawn forward, by the combined action of the mouth and of the anterior legs, and were immediately swallowed.—*Zool. Jour.* Mr. Bell adds, that in others of the *batrachian* reptiles, the *ranæ* and *salamandræ*, no swallowing of the *exuriæ* took place.—W. J.



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is notorious to everybody; because we see them sticking upon each other's backs for a month together in the spring; and yet I never saw or read of toads being observed in the same situation.* It is strange that the matter with regard to the venom of toads has not been yet settled.† That they are not noxious to some animals is plain; for ducks, buzzards, owls, stone curlews, and snakes eat them, to my knowledge, with impunity. And I well remember the time, but was not an eye-witness to the fact (though numbers of persons were), when a quack at this village ate a toad, to make the country people stare; afterwards he drank oil.‡

* The copulation of frogs and toads is performed in the same manner. The spermatic fluid is passed upon the *ova* at the time they are expelled from the female. The *ova* of the frog are laid in conglutinated masses; those of the toad, in long chain-like strings. The *ova* of the latter are also much smaller.—W. J.

† Blumenbach, whose authority may generally be depended on, asserts that there is no truth in the supposition that the urine of toads is poisonous. I recollect, however, the case of a gardener who, while cutting gooseberry bushes, scratched his hand. Afterwards, in taking up a toad which he found under the bush, the animal discharged some of its urine on his hand, which became much inflamed and prevented his working for some time afterwards.—Ed.

‡ I have had a toad so tame that, when it was held in one hand, it would take its food from the other held near it. The manner in which this animal takes its prey is very interesting. The tongue, when at rest, is doubled back upon itself in the mouth, and the apex, which is broad, is imbued with a most tenacious mucus. On seeing an insect, the animal fixes its beautiful eyes upon it, leans or creeps forward, and when within reach, the tongue is projected upon the insect, and again returned into the mouth with the captive prey, by a motion so rapid, that without the most careful observation the action cannot be followed. An insect is never taken unless when in motion; and I have often seen a toad remain motionless for some minutes, with its eyes fixed upon an insect, and the instant it moved it disappeared with the quickness of lightning. The insect is swallowed whole, and alive; and I have often seen the reptile much incommoded by the struggles of its imprisoned prey, particularly if it consist of large and hard insects, as full grown cockroaches, for instance, when the twitching of its sides, from the irritation produced by the movements of the insects in the stomach, is sufficiently ludicrous.—T. B.

My ingenious friend, the late George Newenham, Esq. of Summer Hill, Cork, carried a live toad with him from Edinburgh, which he kept at his country seat of Summer Hill for several years, where it became quite tame, in the same way as that mentioned by White. The most amusing feat which it performed was the swallowing of a worm, which it seemed to relish highly, and was eager to master in proportion to the difficulty presented by the writhings of the creature. The spring before I was at Summer Hill, this singular pet

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I have been informed also, from undoubted authority, that some ladies (ladies, you will say, of peculiar taste) took a fancy to a toad, which they nourished, summer after summer, for many years, till he grew to a monstrous size, with tho

had not made its appearance from its unknown winter retreat, and consequently was supposed to have died, as it was not likely to wander from a spot with which it had become so familiar.

Mr. Husenbeth has given a very interesting account of a tame toad which he placed "in a large glass jar, with moss at the bottom, and sometimes water enough to saturate the moss, but oftener with only a piece of green sod, which I changed," he says, "when the grass began to wither. Sometimes I contrived to let him have a little well of water in the sod; but I never saw him go into water freely; only when he was frightened, he would plunge in and bury his head at the bottom under the sod. Whether he ever knew me I much doubt; but certainly he was always perfectly tame, and would sit on my hand, let me stroke him, and walk about my table or carpet with apparent familiarity and contentment. I usually let him out on the table every day; and he would jump down upon the carpet, and hop and crawl about, always making for the skirting board, which he climbed very ludicrously, and seemed fond of sitting in a corner on the top of it. He ate freely, from the first day I had him; but would never take any thing unless he saw it move. In the whole time, I gave him all the following varieties: flies of all kinds; wasps and bees, first removing their stings; gnats, which he would snap up at the window, while I held him on my hand up to the pane of glass, with an eagerness that appeared insatiable, and was very amusing; clap-baits, lady-birds, caddices, ants: of these last I used occasionally to give him a treat, by bringing home part of a hillock, and putting him down in the midst of it. He would raise himself on all fours, and with his eyes glistening with something like civic ecstasy, would dart out his tongue right and left, as rapidly as lightning, and lap up the ants in quick succession, with the most laudable gulosity. I also gave him earwigs, glow-worms, woodlice, grasshoppers, spiders, dragon-flies, ticks, horse-leeches, grubs, moths, and any insect I could meet with. All seemed equally welcome, either by night or by day; but it was most diverting to see him contend with a worm. He would dart upon it, secure one end, and swallow with all his might; but the worm would annoy him by creeping out of his mouth before he could swallow it entirely; and I have known him persevere for nearly half an hour, attempting to secure his prize, while the worm kept constantly escaping. He would take a snail, when he once saw it extended and in motion, though he always dashed at the shell, and took all down together in a moment, but could not manage one of large size. It was to me a great source of amusement to feed him and watch his singular movements. He was often frightened, but seldom provoked. I once or twice, however, provoked him, I think, to as much wrath as his cold nature was susceptible of; but I feel quite assured that the toad is at all times perfectly harmless and inoffensive: the idea of its spitting, or otherwise discharging venom is, I am convinced, wholly unfounded. In the winter months my toad always refused food, though he did not become torpid, but grew thin and moved much less than at other times.

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maggots, which turn to flesh-flies. The reptile used to come forth every evening from a hole under the garden-steps; and was taken up, after supper, on the table to be fed. But at last a tame raven, kenning him as he put forth his head, gave him such a severe stroke with his horny beak as put out one eye. After this accident, the creature languished for some time and died.

I need not remind a gentleman of your extensive reading, of the excellent account there is from Mr. Derham, in Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, p. 365, concerning the migration of frogs from their breeding-ponds. In this account he at once subverts that foolish opinion, of their dropping from the clouds in rain;* showing that it is from the grateful coolness and moisture of those showers that they are tempted to set out on their travels, which they defer till those fall. Frogs are as yet in their tadpole state; but in a few weeks our lanes, paths, fields, will swarm for a few days with myriads of those emigrants, no larger than my little finger nail. Swammerdam gives a most accurate account of the method and situation in which the male impregnates the spawn of the female. How wonderful is the economy of Providence with regard to the limbs of so vile a reptile! While it is an *aquatic*, it has a fish-like tail and no legs; as soon as the legs sprout, the tail drops off as useless, and the animal betakes itself to the land!

Merret, I trust, is widely mistaken when he advances that the *rana arborea* is an English reptile: it abounds in Germany and Switzerland.

It is to be remembered that the *salamandra aquatica* of

He did not eat from the end of November till March, gradually losing his appetite and gradually recovering it: he never seemed affected by cold, except in the way of losing his inclination for food."—RENNIE.

* I was once witness to a swarm of very small frogs, which suddenly made their appearance, after a very heavy rain, in a garden I occupied at Fulham. The garden was completely surrounded by a high wall. The entrance to it was through the house. It was a dry gravel; and there was no moist place in it in which the spawn of frogs could have been deposited. The garden also had been well trenched and no frogs found in it. There also were no drains communicating with it. I merely mention the fact, without pretending to account for the circumstance of so many thousands of young frogs, just out of the tadpole state, being found in the garden. Mr. Loudon saw the same occurrence at Rouen.—ED.

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THE FROG. (*Rana temporaria.*)

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Ray (the water-newt, or eft*) will frequently bite at the angler's bait, and is often caught on his hook. I used to take it for granted that the *salamandra aquatica* was hatched, lived, and died in the water. But John Ellis, Esq., F.R.S. (the coralline Ellis), asserts, in a letter to the Royal Society, dated June the 5th, 1766, in his account of the *mud iguana*, amphibious *bipes* from South Carolina, that the water-eft, or newt, is only the larva of the land-eft, as tadpoles are of frogs. Lest I should be suspected to misunderstand his meaning, I shall give it in his own words. Speaking of the *opercula*, or coverings to the gills of the *mud iguana*, he proceeds to say, that "The form of these pennated coverings approaches very near to what I have some time ago observed in the *larva*, or *aquatic* state of our English *lacerta*, known by the name of eft, or newt, which serve them for coverings to their gills, and for fins to swim with while in this state; and which they lose, as well as the fins of their tails, when they change their state, and become land animals, as I have observed, by keeping them alive for some time myself."

Linnæus, in his *Systema Naturæ*, hints at what Mr. Ellis advances, more than once.

Providence has been so indulgent to us as to allow of but one venomous reptile of the serpent kind in these kingdoms, and that is the viper. As you propose the good of mankind to be an object of your publications, you will not omit to mention common salad oil as a sovereign remedy against the bite of the viper.† As to the blind worm (*anguis fragilis*, so called because it snaps in sunder with a small blow)

* A friend of mine put a newt into a bottle of brandy, and it lived ten minutes in it. This will prove how capable they are of undergoing the extremes of heat and cold, as they have been known to recover after having been frozen perfectly hard. There are also undoubted proofs of newts having lived in the intestines of human beings. A leech, also, after it has been frozen and then thawed, will live and suck eagerly. Both newts, lizards, and some other amphibia, are provided with lungs, and might be supposed capable of uttering sounds, but they are altogether mute.—Ed.

† A blind worm, that I kept alive for nine weeks, would, when touched, turn and bite, although not very sharply: its bite was not sufficient to draw blood, but it always retained its hold until released. It drank sparingly of milk, raising the head when drinking. It fed upon the little white slug (*limax agrestis*, Linn.) so common in fields and gardens, eating six or seven of them one after the other; but it did not eat them every day. It invariably took them in one position. Elevating its head slowly above its victim, it

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I have found, on examination, that it is perfectly innocuous. A neighbouring yeoman (to whom I am indebted for some good hints) killed and opened a female viper about the 27th of May: he found her filled with a chain of eleven eggs, about the size of those of a blackbird; but none of them were advanced so far towards a state of maturity as to contain any rudiments of young. Though they are oviparous, yet they are viviparous also, hatching their young within their bellies, and then bringing them forth. Whereas snakes lay chains of eggs every summer in my melon beds, in spite of all that my people can do to prevent them; which eggs do not hatch till the spring following, as I have often experienced. Several intelligent folks assure me that they have seen the viper open her mouth and admit her helpless young down her throat on sudden surprises, just as the female opossum does her brood into the pouch under her belly, upon the like emergencies; and yet the London viper-catchers insist on it to Mr. Barrington, that no such thing ever happens.* The serpent kind eat, I believe, but once in

would suddenly seize the slug by the middle, in the same manner that a ferret or dog will generally take a rat by the loins; it would then hold it thus sometimes for more than a minute, when it would pass its prey through its jaws and swallow the slug head foremost. It refused the larger slugs, and would not touch either young frogs or mice. Snakes kept in the same cage took both frogs and mice. The blind worm avoided the water: the snakes, on the contrary, coiled themselves in the pan containing water, which was put into the cage, and appeared to delight in it. The blind worm was a remarkably fine one, measuring fifteen inches in length. It cast its slough while in my keeping. The skin came off in separate pieces, the largest of which was two inches in length, splitting first on the belly, and the peeling on the head being completed the last. After the skin was cast the colour of the reptile was much lighter than it had before been.

I had for the first time, while this blind worm was in my custody, an opportunity of witnessing the power which slugs have of suspending themselves by a thread. They availed themselves of it in escaping from the cage of the reptile. The cage was on a shelf four feet six inches from the floor, and, with the aid of the glutinous filament which they exuded, the slugs lowered themselves from it to the ground.—G. D.

* Having taken much pains to ascertain the fact of young vipers entering the mouth of the mother, I can now have little doubt but that such is the case, after the evidence of persons who assured me they had seen it. I also found young vipers in the stomach of the mother, of a much larger size than they would be when first ready to be excluded. Amongst others, a viper-catcher on the Brighton downs told me that he had often witnessed the fact.—Ed.

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THE VIPER, OR ADDER. (*Vipera berus.*)

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a year; or, rather, but only just at one season of the year. Country people talk much of a water-snake, but, I am pretty sure, without any reason; for the common snake (*coluber natrix*) delights much to sport in the water, perhaps with a view to procure frogs and other food.*

I cannot well guess how you are to make out your twelve species of reptiles, unless it be by the various species, or rather varieties, of our *lacerti*, of which Ray enumerates five. I have not had opportunity of ascertaining these, but remember well to have seen, formerly, several beautiful green *lacerti* on the sunny sand-banks near Farnham, in Surrey; and Ray admits there are such in Ireland.

## LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *July* 27, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—I received your obliging and communicative letter of June the 28th, while I was on a visit at a gentleman's house, where I had neither books to turn to, nor leisure to sit down to return you an answer to many queries, which I wanted to resolve in the best manner that I am able.

A person, by my order, has searched our brooks, but could find no such fish as the *gasterosteus rungitius*; he found *gasterosteus aculeatus* in plenty. This morning, in a basket, I packed a little earthern pot full of wet moss, and in it some sticklebacks, male and female, the females big

* The common snake often takes to the water and swims well and boldly. Not only do they swim across the wide parts of the river Ouse, but they have been seen to swim to the Isle of Wight from the Hampshire coast, and have occasionally been seen swimming in Portsmouth Harbour.

As a proof of the accuracy of Mr. White's observation, that snakes probably go into the water to procure food, I may mention, that a gentleman lately saw one of these reptiles in a stream and under some weeds, consequently under water, watching for prey. Having observed it for some minutes, he took it out of the water, when it not only emitted a most unpleasant stench, but struck at him several times like a viper.—ED.

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with spawn; some lamperns; some bull-heads; but I could procure no minnows. This basket will be in Fleet-street by eight this evening; so I hope Mazel* will have them fresh and fair to-morrow morning. I gave some directions in a letter, to what particulars the engraver should be attentive.†

Finding, while I was on a visit, that I was within a reasonable distance of Ambresbury, I sent a servant over to that town, and procured several living specimens of loaches, which he brought safe and brisk, in a glass decanter. They were taken in the gulleys that were cut for watering the meadows. From these fishes (which measured from two to four inches in length) I took the following description:—"The loach, in its general aspect, has a pellucid appearance; its back is mottled with irregular collections of small black dots, not reaching much below the *linea literalis*, as are the back and tail fins; a black line runs from each eye down to the nose; its belly is of a silvery white; the upper jaw projects beyond the lower, and is surrounded with six feelers, three on each side; its pectoral fins are large, its ventral much smaller; the fin behind its anus small; its dorsal fin large, containing eight spines; its tail, where it joins to the tail fin, remarkably broad, without any taperness, so as to be characteristic of this genus; the tail fin is broad, and square at the end. From the breadth and muscular strength of the tail, it appears to be an active nimble fish."

In my visit I was not very far from Hungerford, and did not forget to make some inquiries concerning the wonderful

* Mr. Peter Mazel was the engraver of the plates of the British Zoology. He also engraved some of the plates for the original edition of this work.—Ed.

† The manner in which the common lamprey, *petromyzon marinus*, and the lesser species, commonly known as lamperns, form their spawning-beds, is curious. They ascend our rivers to breed, about the end of June, and remain until the beginning of August. They are not furnished with any elongation of jaw, afforded to most of our fresh-water fish, to form the receiving furrows in this important season; but the want is supplied by their sucker-like mouth, by which they individually remove each stone. Their power is immense. Stones of a very large size are transported, and a large furrow is soon formed. The *p. marinus* remain in pairs, two on each spawning-place, and while there employed, retain themselves affixed by the mouths to a large stone. The *p. fluviatilis*, and another small species which I have not determined, are gregarious, acting in concert, and forming, in the same manner, a general spawning-bed.—W. J.

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method of curing cancers by means of toads. Several intelligent persons, both gentry and clergy, do, I find, give a great deal of credit to what was asserted in the papers; and I myself dined with a clergyman who seemed to be persuaded that what is related is matter of fact; but, when I came to attend to his account, I thought I discerned circumstances which did not a little invalidate the woman's story of the manner in which she came by her skill. She says of herself, that, "labouring under a virulent cancer, she went to some church where there was a vast crowd; on going into a pew, she was accosted by a strange clergyman, who, after expressing compassion for her situation, told her, that if she would make such an application of living toads as is mentioned, she would be well." Now, is it likely that this unknown gentleman should express so much tenderness for this single sufferer, and not feel any for the many thousands that daily languish under this terrible disorder? Would he not have made use of this invaluable nostrum for his own emolument? or, at least, by some means of publication or other, have found a method of making it public for the good of mankind? In short, this woman (as it appears to me) having set up for a cancer doctress, finds it expedient to amuse the country with this dark and mysterious relation.

The water-eft has not, that I can discern, the least appearance of any gills; for want of which it is continually rising to the surface of the water to take in fresh air. I opened a big-bellied one, indeed, and found it full of spawn. Not that this circumstance at all invalidates the assertion that they are *larvæ;* for the *larvæ* of insects are full of eggs, which they exclude the instant they enter their last state. The water-eft is continually climbing over the brims of the vessel, within which we keep it in water, and wandering away; and people every summer see numbers crawling out of the pools where they are hatched, up the dry banks. There are varieties of them differing in colour; and some have fins up their tail and back, and some have not.*

* The fins, or membrane on the tail and back, increase greatly at the season of generation; at other times they are hardly perceptible.—W. J.

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## LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Aug.* 17, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—I have now, past dispute, made out three distinct species of the willow-wrens (*motacillae trochili*), which constantly and invariably use distinct notes.* But, at the same time, I am obliged to confess that I know nothing of your willow-lark.† In my letter of April the 18th, I had told you peremptorily that I knew your willow-lark, but had not seen it then; but, when I came to procure it, it proved in all respects a very *motacilla trochilus;* only that it is a size larger than the two other, and the yellow-green of the whole upper part of the body is more vivid, and the belly of a clearer white. I have specimens of the three sorts now lying before me; and can discern that there are three gradations of sizes, and that the least has black legs, and the other two, flesh-coloured ones. The yellowest bird is considerably the largest, and has its quill feathers and secondary feathers tipped with white, which the others have not. This last haunts only the tops of trees in high beechen woods, and makes a sibilous grasshopper-like noise now and then, at short intervals, shivering a little with its wings when it sings; and is, I make no doubt now, the *regulus non cristatus* of Ray; which he says, "*cantat voce stridulâ locustæ.*"‡ Yet this great ornithologist never suspected that there were three species.

* These birds are accurately described and beautifully figured in Mr. Selby's and Mr. Yarrell's works on British birds, to which the reader is referred.—ED.

† Pennant's *Brit. Zool.*, edit. 1776, octavo, p. 381.

‡ Without doubt, *sylvia sibilatrix*, or wood-wren.—W. J.

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## LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Oct.* 8, 1768.

IT is, I find, in zoology as it is in botany; all nature is so full, that that district produces the greatest variety which is the most examined. Several birds, which are said to belong to the north only, are, it seems, often in the south. I have discovered this summer three species of birds with us, which writers mention as only to be seen in the northern counties. The first that was brought me (on the 14th of May) was the sandpiper (*tringa hypoleucus*): it was a cock bird, and haunted the banks of some ponds near the village; and, as it had a companion, doubtless intended to have bred near that water. Besides, the owner has told me since, that on recollection he has seen some of the same birds round his ponds in former summers.*

The next bird that I procured (on the 21st of May) was a male red-backed butcher-bird (*lanius collurio*). My neighbour, who shot it, says that it might easily have escaped his notice, had not the outcries and chattering of the white-throats and other small birds drawn his attention to the bush where it was: its craw was filled with the legs and wings of beetles.

* This species, the *totanus hypoleucus* of modern ornithologists, is most abundant on all the rocky brooks in the north of England and Scotland, arriving to breed early in spring, and in autumn again retiring to our coasts, in small flocks, with its young. About October they are again dispersed, migrating to warmer shores. I have received specimens from Africa, the Delft Islands, and various parts of India and China.—W. J.

There is nothing very remarkable in the occurrence of these birds in southern counties. The sandpiper is disposed to breed in any part of England, where it can be free from disturbance. The red-backed butcher-bird belongs rather to the south, and is scarcely ever met in the north. The ring-ousel is in Hampshire a bird of passage, crossing that county in the spring and autumn, in its way to and from its breeding-places, in the rocky districts of the north and west.—E. T. B.

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The next rare birds (which were procured for me last week) were some ring-ousels (*turdi torquati*).*

This week twelvemonths a gentleman from London being with us, was amusing himself with a gun, and found, he told us, on an old yew hedge where there were berries, some birds like blackbirds, with rings of white round their necks; a neighbouring farmer also at the same time observed the same; but, as no specimens were procured, little notice was taken. I mentioned this circumstance to you in my letter of November the 4th, 1767 (you, however, paid but small regard to what I said, as I had not seen these birds myself): but last week the aforesaid farmer, seeing a large flock, twenty or thirty, of these birds, shot two cocks and two hens; and says, on recollection, that he remembers to have observed these birds again last spring, about Lady-day, as it were on their return to the north. Now, perhaps these ousels are not the ousels of the north of England, but belong to the more northern parts of Europe; and may retire before the excessive rigour of the frosts in those parts; and return to breed in spring when the cold abates. If this be the case, here is discovered a new bird of winter passage, concerning whose migrations the writers are silent; but if these birds should prove the ousels of the north of England, then here is a migration disclosed within our own kingdom, never before remarked. It does not yet appear whether they retire beyond the bounds of our island to the south; but it is most probable that they usually do, or else one cannot suppose that they would have continued so long unnoticed in the southern counties. The ousel is larger than a blackbird, and feeds on haws; but last autumn (when there were no haws) it fed on yew-berries: in the spring it feeds on ivy-berries, which ripen only at that season, in March and April.

I must not omit to tell you (as you have been so lately on

* Before migrating to their winter quarters, and often ere the duties of incubation are over, they leave their mountainous haunts, and descend to the nearest gardens, where they commit severe depredations among the cherries, gooseberries, &c. They also frequent holly hedges and the mountain ash, whenever the fruit of these trees is so early as to be of service during their passage. They are known to the country people under the title of "*Mountain Blackbirds.*"—W. J.

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THE RINGOUSEL.

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the study of reptiles) that my people, every now and then of late, draw up, with a bucket of water from my well, which is sixty-three feet deep, a large black warty lizard, with a fin tail and yellow belly. How they first came down at that depth, and how they were ever to have got out thence without help, is more than I am able to say.

My thanks are due to you for your trouble and care in the examination of a buck's head. As far as your discoveries reach at present, they seem much to corroborate my suspicions; and I hope Mr. —— may find reason to give his decision in my favour; and then, I think, we may advance this extraordinary provision of nature as a new instance of the wisdom of God in the creation.

As yet I have not quite done with my history of the *œdicnemus*, or stone curlew; for I shall desire a gentleman in Sussex (near whose house these birds congregate in vast flocks in the autumn) to observe nicely when they leave him (if they do leave him), and when they return again in the spring: I was with this gentleman lately, and saw several single birds.

## LETTER XXI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 28, 1768.

DEAR SIR,—With regard to the *œdicnemus*, or stone curlew, I intend to write very soon to my friend near Chichester, in whose neighbourhood these birds seem most to abound; and shall urge him to take particular notice when they begin to congregate, and afterwards to watch them most narrowly whether they do not withdraw themselves during the dead of the winter. When I have obtained information with respect to this circumstance, I shall have finished my history of the stone curlew, which, I hope, will prove to your satisfaction, as it will be, I trust, very near the truth. This gentleman, as he occupies a large farm of his own, and is abroad early and late, will be a very proper spy upon the

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motions of these birds; and besides, as I have prevailed on him to buy the *Naturalist's Journal* (with which he is much delighted), I shall expect that he will be very exact in his dates. It is very extraordinary, as you obseve, that a bird so common with us should never straggle to you.*

And here will be the properest place to mention, while I think of it, an anecdote which the above mentioned gentleman told me when I was last at his house; which was, that in a warren joining to his outlet, many daws (*corvi monedulæ*) build every year in the rabbit-burrows under ground.† The way he and his brothers used to take their nests, while they were boys, was by listening at the mouths of the holes, and if they heard the young ones cry, they twisted the nest out with a forked stick. Some water-fowls (viz. the puffins) breed, I know, in this manner; but I should never have suspected the daws of building in holes on the flat ground.

Another very unlikely spot is made use of by daws as a place to breed in, and that is Stonehenge. These birds deposit their nests in the interstices between the upright and the impost stones of that amazing work of antiquity; which circumstance alone speaks the prodigious height of the upright stones, that they should be tall enough to secure those nests from the annoyance of shepherd boys, who are always idling round that place.

One of my neighbours last Saturday (November the 26th)‡

* This species is extremely local, being scarcely found out of Hampshire, Norfolk, and one or two of the eastern counties of England.—W. J.

Mr. Herbert says that "he has only found it on chalk. It never strayed on the sand or gravel, and consequently was not on the heaths, but in the chalky turnip fields." This species is, no doubt, extremely local and only finds the food it requires, chiefly small green beetles, on chalk soils.—Ed.

† Daws build in a great variety of odd places, and use curious materials for their nests. Clothes-pegs and lucifer match-boxes have been found in them. They have been known to carry away the wooden labels from a botanic garden. In one instance, no less than eighteen dozen of these labels are said to be found in one chimney where the daws built. In my "Scenes and Tales of Country Life," I have given an engraving of a daw's nest built in the bell tower of Eton chapel, perhaps one of the most curious structures on record.—Ed.

‡ Mr. Yarrell informs me that a series of interesting experiments might be made with the view to ascertain by artificial means how low a degree of temperature swallows could sustain for a time without destroying life.—Ed.

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THE JACKDAW.

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saw a martin in a sheltered bottom; the sun shone warm, and the bird was hawking briskly after flies. I am now perfectly satisfied that they do not all leave this island in the winter.

You judge very right, I think, in speaking with reserve and caution concerning the cures done by toads; for, let people advance what they will on such subjects, yet there is such a propensity in mankind towards deceiving and being deceived, that one cannot safely relate anything from common report, especially in print, without expressing some degree of doubt and suspicion.

Your approbation with regard to my new discovery of the migration of the ring-ousel, gives me satisfaction; and I find you concur with me in suspecting that they are foreign birds which visit us. You will be sure, I hope, not to omit to make inquiry whether your ring-ousels leave your rocks in the autumn. What puzzles me most, is the very short stay they make with us, for in about three weeks they are all gone. I shall be very curious to remark whether they will call on us at their return in the spring, as they did last year.

I want to be better informed with regard to ichthyology. If fortune had settled me near the sea-side, or near some great river, my natural propensity would soon have urged me to have made myself acquainted with their productions; but as I have lived mostly in inland parts, and in an upland district, my knowledge of fishes extends little farther than to those common sorts which our brooks and lakes produce.

## LETTER XXII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 2, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—As to the peculiarity of jack-daws building with us under ground, in rabbit-burrows, you have, in part, hit upon the reason; for, in reality, there are hardly any towers or steeples in all this country. And perhaps, Nor-



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folk excepted, Hampshire and Sussex are as meanly furnished with churches as almost any counties in the kingdom.* We have many livings of two or three hundred pounds a-year, whose houses of worship make little better appearance than dovecots. When I first saw Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire, and the Fens of Lincolnshire, I was amazed at the number of spires which presented themselves in every point of view. As an admirer of prospects, I have reason to lament this want in my own country, for such objects are very necessary ingredients in an elegant landscape.

What you mention with respect to reclaimed toads raises my curiosity. An ancient author, though no naturalist, has well remarked, that "Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."†

It is a satisfaction to me to find that a green lizard has actually been procured for you in Devonshire, because it corroborates my discovery, which I made many years ago, of the same sort, on a sunny sand-bank near Farnham, in Surrey. I am well acquainted with the south hams of Devonshire, and can suppose that district, from its southerly situation, to be a proper habitation for such animals in their best colours.

Since the ring-ousels of your vast mountains do certainly not forsake them against winter, our suspicions that those which visit this neighbourhood about Michaelmas are not English birds, but driven from the more northern parts of Europe by the frosts, are still more reasonable; and it will be worth your pains to endeavour to trace from whence they come, and to inquire why they make so very short a stay.

In your account of your error with regard to the two

* Necessity often obliges birds to build in odd places. A pair of magpies in a district where there were no trees, made their nest in a gooseberry-bush in a cotter's garden, and surrounded it with brambles, furze, &c. in so ingenious a manner that no one would get at the eggs without pulling the materials to pieces. I have seen a colony of rooks build on the top of some young ash trees growing close to a farmhouse door, the trees being very spindly, and not more than ten or twelve feet high. There were no large trees in the neighbourhood. And I may mention that I saw at Pipe Hall, in Warwickshire, a swallow's nest built on the knocker of a door.—Ed.

† St. James, chap. iii. 7.

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species of herons, you incidentally gave me great entertainment in your description of the heronry at Cressy-hall, which is a curiosity I never could manage to see. Fourscore nests of such a bird on one tree, is a rarity which I would ride half as many miles to have a sight of.* Pray be sure to tell me in your next whose seat Cressy-hall is, and near what town it lies.† I have often thought that those vast extents of fens have never been sufficiently explored. If half-a-dozen gentlemen, furnished with a good strength of water spaniels, were to beat them over for a week, they would certainly find more species.

There is no bird, I believe, whose manners I have studied more than that of the *caprimulgus* (the goat-sucker), as it is a wonderful and curious creature; but I have always found, that though sometimes it may chatter as it flies, as I know it does, yet in general it utters its jarring note sitting on a bough; and I have for many a half hour watched it as it sat with its under mandible quivering, and particularly this summer. It perches usually on a bare twig, with its head lower than its tail, in an attitude well expressed by your draughtsman in the folio *British Zoology*. This bird is most punctual in beginning its song exactly at the close of day; so exactly, that I have known it strike up more than once or twice just at the report of the Portsmouth evening gun, which we can hear when the weather is still. It appears to me past all doubt, that its notes are formed by organic impulse, by the powers of the parts of its windpipe formed for sound, just as cats pur. You will credit me, I hope, when I assure you, that, as my neighbours were assembled in an hermitage on the side of a steep hill where we drink tea, one of these churn-owls came and settled on the cross of that little straw edifice, and began to chatter, and con-

* One of the finest heronries we now have is perhaps the one in Windsor Great Park, taking into account the number of nests, and the noble and great heighth of the beech-trees on which they are built. I once witnessed an interesting fight at this heronry between a pair of ravens and some of the herons. It was early in the spring, and the former birds evidently wanted to take possession of one of the nests of the latter, who, however, did not appear to wish for so dangerous a neighbour. The fight was continued in the air for a length of time, but in the end the herons had the advantage and beat off the ravens.—Ed.

† Cressy-hall is near Spalding, in Lincolnshire.



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tinued his note for many minutes; and we were all struck with wonder to find that the organs of that little animal, when put in motion, gave a sensible vibration to the whole building! This bird also sometimes makes a small squeak, repeated four or five times; and I have observed that to happen when the cock has been pursuing the hen in a toying manner through the boughs of a tree.*

* Mr. White's excellent description of this curious species, in the present and subsequent letters, is only equalled by those of a most accurate American ornithologist, whose delineations of the manners of the different species that occurred to him, ought to be examined as models by every describing naturalist. Mr. Wilson thus beautifully describes the calling of the Whip-poor-will of the Americans:—"On or about the 25th of April, if the season be not uncommonly cold, the Whip-poor-will is heard in Pennsylvania, in the evening, as the dusk of twilight commences, or in the morning, as soon as dawn has broke. The notes of this solitary bird, from the ideas which are naturally associated with them, seem like the voice of an old friend, and are listened to by almost all with great interest. At first they issue from some retired part of the woods, the glen, or mountain; in a few evenings, perhaps, we hear them from the adjoining coppice, the garden fence, the road before the door, and even the roof of the dwelling-house, hours after the family have retired to rest. Some of the more ignorant and superstitious consider this near approach as foreboding no good to the family, nothing less than the sickness, misfortune, or death of some of its members. Every morning and evening his shrill and rapid repetitions are heard from the adjoining woods; and when two or more are calling at the same time, as is often the case in the pairing season, and at no great distance from each other, the noise, mingling with the echoes from the mountains, is really surprising. Strangers, in parts of the country where these birds are numerous, find it almost impossible for some time to sleep; while to those long acquainted with them, the sound often serves as a lullaby, to assist their repose. The notes seem pretty plainly to articulate the words which have been generally applied to them, '*Whip-poor-will*,' the first and last syllables being uttered with great emphasis, and the whole in about a second to each repetition; but when two or more males meet, their *whip-poor-will* altercations become much more rapid and incessant, as if each were straining to overpower or silence the other. When near, you often hear an introductory cluck between the notes. At these times, as well as almost at all others, they fly low, not more than a few feet from the surface, skimming about the house and before the door, alighting on the wood-pile, or settling on the roof. Towards midnight they generally become silent, unless in clear moonlight, when they are heard, with little intermission, till morning."—W. J.

The night-jar appears to have been a very favourite bird with Mr. White, who has described its habits with great accuracy. It is by no means as common a bird as when Mr. White wrote, owing to the numerous enclosures which have since taken place, of the favourite haunts of this bird, and of the anxiety of collectors to possess specimens of it. Keepers also, either mistaking it for a bird of prey, or from mere wantonness, kill it when they can

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THE GOAT-SUCKER.

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It would not be at all strange if your bat, which you have procured, should prove a new one, since five species have been found in a neighbouring kingdom. The great sort that I mentioned is certainly a nondescript: I saw but one this summer, and that I had no opportunity of taking.

Your account of the Indian grass was entertaining. I am no angler myself; but inquiring of those that are, what they supposed that part of their tackle to be made of, they replied, "of the intestines of a silkworm."

Though I must not pretend to great skill in entomology, yet I cannot say that I am ignorant of that kind of knowledge: I may now and then perhaps be able to furnish you with a little information.

The vast rain ceased with us much about the same time as with you, and since we have had delicate weather. Mr. Barker, who has measured the rain for more than thirty years, says, in a late letter, that more rain has fallen this year than in any he ever attended to; though, from July, 1763, to January, 1764, more fell than in any seven months of this year.

## LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 28, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—It is not improbable that the Guernsey lizard and our green lizards may be specifically the same; all that I know is, that when, some years ago, many Guernsey lizards were turned loose in Pembroke college garden, in the university of Oxford, they lived a great while, and seemed to enjoy themselves very well; but never bred. Whether this circumstance will prove anything either way, I shall not pretend to say.

I return you thanks for your account of Cressy-hall; but

do so. This is much to be regretted; for it is one of our most interesting birds of passage, and its arrival is hailed with pleasure by those who watch its curious habits and instincts.—ED.

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recollect, not without regret, that in June, 1746, I was visiting for a week together at Spalding, without ever being told that such a curiosity was just at hand. Pray send me word in your next what sort of tree it is that contains such a quantity of herons' nests; and whether the heronry consists of a whole grove or wood, or only of a few trees.

It gave me satisfaction to find we accorded so well about the *caprimulgus;* all I contended for was to prove that it often chatters sitting as well as flying, and therefore the noise was voluntary and from organic impulse, and not from the resistance of the air against the hollow of its mouth and throat.

If ever I saw anything like actual migration, it was last Michaelmas-day.* I was travelling, and out early in the

* The subject of migration appears to have been a very favourite one with our author, occupying the greater part of many of his subsequent letters, and evidently often the subject of his private thoughts. He sometimes seems puzzled with regard to the possibility of many of the migrating species being able to undergo the fatigue of long or continued journeys; and often wishes almost to believe, though contrary to his better judgment, that some of these enter into a regular torpidity. We find torpidity occurring among animals, fishes, the amphibiæ, and reptiles, and among insects; but we have never found any authenticated instance of this provision taking place among birds. Their frames are adapted to a more extensive locomotive power; and the change to climates more congenial to their constitutions, preventing the necessity of any actual change in the system, is supplied to those animals deprived of the power for extensive migration, by a temporary suspension of the most of the faculties which, in other circumstances, would be entirely destroyed. Birds, it is true, are occasionally found in holes, particularly our summer birds of passage, in what has been called a torpid state, and have revived upon being placed in a warmer temperature; but this, I consider, has always been a suspended animation, where all the functions were entirely bound up as in death, and which, by the continuance of a short period, would have caused death itself—not torpidity, where various functions and secretions, capable for a time of sustaining the frame, are still going on.

The possibility of performing long journeys, as we must believe some species are obliged to do before arriving at their destination, at first appears nearly incredible; but, when brought to a matter of plain calculation, the difficulty is much diminished. The flight of birds may be estimated at from 50 to 150 miles an hour: and if we take a medium of this as a rate for the migrating species, we shall have little difficulty in reconciling the possibility of their flights. This, however, can only be applied to such species as, in their migrations, have to cross some vast extent of ocean, without a resting-place. Many that visit this country, particularly those from Africa, merely skirt the coast, crossing at the narrowest parts, and again progressively advancing, until

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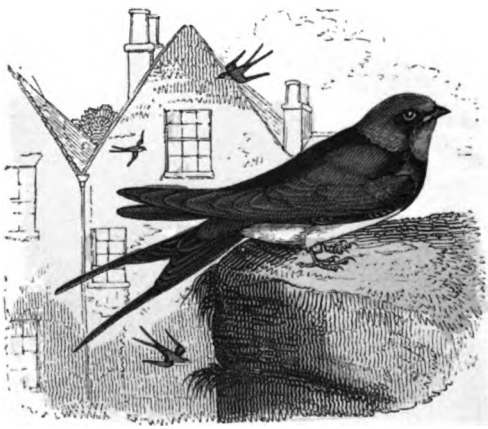

THE COMMON SWALLOW.

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morning: at first there was a vast fog; but, by the time that I was got seven or eight miles from home towards the coast, the sun broke out into a delicate warm day. We were then on a large heath, or common, and I could discern, as the mist began to break away, great numbers of swallows (*hirundines rusticæ*) clustering on the stunted shrubs and bushes, as if they had roosted there all night. As soon as the air became clear and pleasant, they all were on the wing at once; and, by a placid and easy flight, proceeded on southward, towards the sea: after this I did not see any more flocks, only now and then a straggler.

I cannot agree with those persons who assert, that the swallow kind disappear some and some, gradually, as they come; for the bulk of them seem to withdraw at once; only some stragglers stay behind a long while, and do never, there is the greatest reason to believe, leave this island. Swallows seem to lay themselves up, and to come forth in a warm day, as bats do continually of a warm evening, after they have disappeared for weeks. For a very respectable gentleman assured me that, as he was walking with some friends, under Merton-wall on a remarkably hot noon, either in the last week in December, or the first week in January, he espied three or four swallows huddled together on the moulding of one of the windows of that college. I have frequently remarked that swallows are seen later at Oxford than elsewhere: is it owing to the vast massy buildings of that place, to the many waters round it, or to what else?

they reach their final quarters; and during this time having their supply of suitable food daily augmented.

The causes influencing the migration of birds, appear more difficult to solve than the possibility of the execution of it. They seem to be influenced by an innate law, which we do not, and cannot, comprehend, though in some measure dependent on the want of food or climate congenial to the system of each, and which acts almost without the will of the individual. Neither this, however, nor the duties incumbent on incubation, can be the only exciting causes, as we may judge by the partial migrations of some to different parts of the same country, where food and the conveniences for breeding are alike; by the partial migration only, of a species from one country to another, differing decidedly in temperature, and where the visiting species thrives equally with the resident one; and by the males of some species migrating, while the females remain.—W. J.

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When I used to rise in a morning last autumn, and see the swallows and martins clustering on the chimneys and thatch of the neighbouring cottages, I could not help being touched with a secret delight, mixed with some degree of mortification: with delight, to observe with how much ardour and punctuality those poor little birds obeyed the strong impulse towards migration, or hiding, imprinted on their minds by their great Creator; and with some degree of mortification, when I reflected that, after all our pains and inquiries, we are not yet quite certain to what regions they do migrate; and are still farther embarrassed to find that some actually do not migrate at all.

These reflections made so strong an impression on my imagination, that they became productive of a composition that may perhaps amuse you for a quarter of an hour when next I have the honour of writing to you.

## LETTER XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *May* 29, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—The *scarabæus fullo** I know very well, having seen it in collections; but have never been able to discover one wild in its natural state. Mr. Banks told me he thought it might be found on the sea-coast.

On the 13th of April, I went to the sheep-down, where the ring-ousels have been observed to make their appearance at spring and fall, in their way, perhaps, to the north or south; and was much pleased to see three birds about the usual spot. We shot a cock and a hen; they were plump and in high condition. The hen had but very small rudiments of eggs within her, which proves they are late breeders; whereas those species of the thrush kind that

* It is properly the *melolontha fullo*. Mr. Bennett says that all the specimens of this noble chafer that have yet been captured in England, have occurred on the coast of Kent, Dover appearing the middle point of their range.—ED.

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remain with us the whole year, have fledged young before that time. In their crops was nothing very distinguishable, but somewhat that seemed like blades of vegetables nearly digested. In autumn they feed on haws and yew-berries, and in the spring on ivy-berries. I dressed one of these birds, and found it juicy and well-flavoured. It is remarkable that they make but a few days' stay in their spring visit, but rest near a fortnight at Michaelmas. These birds, from the observations of three springs and two autumns, are most punctual in their return; and exhibit a new migration unnoticed by the writers, who supposed they never were to be seen in any of the southern counties.

One of my neighbours lately brought me a new salicaria, which, at first, I suspected might have proved your willow-lark;* but on a nicer examination, it answered much better to the description of that species which you shot at Revesby, in Lincolnshire. My bird I describe thus:—"It is a size less than the grasshopper-lark; the head, back, and coverts of the wings of a dusky brown, without the dark spots of the grasshopper-lark: over each eye is a milk-white stroke; the chin and throat are white, and the under parts of a yellowish white; the rump is tawny, and the feathers of the tail sharp pointed; the bill is dusky and sharp, and the legs are dusky, the hinder claw long and crooked."† The person that shot it says, that it sung so like a reed sparrow, that he took it for one;‡ and that it sings all night: but this

* For this salicaria, see Letter xxvi. p. 98.

† *Sylvia phragmites.* Bechst. Sedge warbler.—Selby's *Ornith.*—W. J.

‡ This is an error which runs through most of our books of ornithology. The reed bunting, commonly called the reed sparrow, has no song. Like its congeners, in this country, it has only a monotonous cry. The bird above mentioned, *salicaria phragmitis*, or sedge-warbler, is perpetually singing by night if disturbed, as well as by day, and the reed-bunting has often got the credit of its song. The sedge-warbler is very abundant at Spofforth, but I have never discovered the reed-warbler, its near congener, here. Bewick has confounded these two species, and has given a plate and description of the sedge-warbler, under the name of the reed-warbler, which last has not been observed north of the Trent. The reed-warbler is of a uniform reddish brown with a little olive cast on the upper parts, and whitish on the belly; the sedge-warbler has a light stripe over the eye, and the middle of each feather, on the upper parts, dashed with very dark brown. I have found its nest on the ground in a tuft of rushes, in long grasses and herbs, being made fast to the stalks in a dead hedge, but most frequently in thorn fences, and low bushes,

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account merits farther inquiry. For my part, I suspect it is a second sort of *locustella*, hinted at by Dr. Derham in Ray's *Letters:* see p. 74. He also procured me a grasshopper-lark.

The question that you put with regard to those genera of animals that are peculiar to America, viz. how they came there, and whence? is too puzzling for me to answer; and yet so obvious as often to have struck me with wonder. If one looks into the writers on that subject, little satisfaction is to be found. Ingenious men will readily advance plausible arguments to support whatever theory they shall choose to maintain; but then the misfortune is, every one's hypothesis is each as good as another's, since they are all founded on conjecture. The late writers of this sort, in whom may be seen all the arguments of those that have gone before, as I remember, stock America from the western coast of Africa, and the south of Europe; and then break down the isthmus that bridged over the Atlantic. But this is making use of a violent piece of machinery: it is a difficulty worthy of the interposition of a god! "*Incredulus odi*," "Disbelieving I detest."

and willows, often in the currant bushes in gardens near a wet ditch or stream. The reed-wren builds in general higher, sometimes in a poplar tree, often in the tall lilacs in the Regent's Park: our books mostly state willows, and that it builds in the reeds, but it often prefers a tall bush or a small tree if there be one in the neighbourhood. Its bill is stronger than that of the sedge-warbler, and it seems to be less patient of cold. Its nest is deeper. The song of individuals of the two species is very similar, and cannot easily be distinguished. Mr. White calls the sedge-warbler a delicate polyglott; and speaks of its song as very superior to that of the whitethroat, in which I can by no means agree with him. Its notes are very hurried, some parts of its song are good, but others singularly harsh and disagreeable. They are greedy birds, and in confinement are apt to die from excessive fat; becoming so unwieldy as to hurt and bruise themselves by tumbling down.—W. H.

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TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQUIRE.

## THE NATURALIST'S SUMMER EVENING WALK.

—— equidem credo, quia sit divinitus illis
Ingenium. VIRG. *Georg.*

The instructive arts that in their labours shine,
I deem inspired by energy divine.

WHEN day declining sheds a milder gleam,
What time the May-fly* haunts the pool or stream;
When the still owl skims round the grassy mead,
What time the timorous hare limps forth to feed;
Then be the time to steal adown the vale,
And listen to the vagrant cuckoo's† tale;
To hear the clamorous curlew‡ call his mate,
Or the soft quail his tender pain relate;
To see the swallow sweep the darkening plain,
Belated, to support her infant train;
To mark the swift, in rapid giddy ring,
Dash round the steeple, unsubdued of wing:
Amusive birds! say where your hid retreat,
When the frost rages and the tempests beat?
Whence your return, by such nice instinct led,
When Spring, soft season, lifts her bloomy head?
Such baffled searches mock man's prying pride,
The God of Nature is your secret guide!
While deepening shades obscure the face of day,
To yonder bench, leaf shelter'd, let us stray,

* The angler's May-fly, the *ephemera vulgata*, Linn., comes forth from its aurelia state, and emerges out of the water about six in the evening, and dies about eleven at night, determining the date of its fly state in about five or six hours. They usually begin to appear about the 4th of June, and continue in succession for near a fortnight.—See Swammerdam, Derham, Scopoli, &c.

† Vagrant cuckoo; so called, because, being tied down by no incubation or attendance about the nutrition of its young, it wanders without control.

‡ *Charadrius œdicnemus.*

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Till blended objects fail the swimming sight,
And all the fading landscape sinks in night;
To hear the drowsy dorr come brushing by
With buzzing wing, or the shrill cricket* cry;
To see the feeding bat glance through the wood;
To catch the distant falling of the flood;
While o'er the cliff th' awaken'd churn-owl hung,
Through the still gloom protracts his chattering song;
While, high in air, and poised upon his wings,
Unseen, the soft enamour'd woodlark† sings:
These, Nature's works, the curious mind employ,
Inspire a soothing melancholy joy:
As fancy warms, a pleasing kind of pain
Steals o'er the cheek, and thrills the creeping vein!
Each rural sight, each sound, each smell combine;
The tinkling sheep-bell, or the breath of kine;
The new-mown hay that scents the swelling breeze,
Or cottage chimney smoking through the trees.
The chilling night-dews fall:—away, retire;
For see, the glow-worm lights her amorous fire!‡
Thus, ere night's veil had half obscured the sky,
Th' impatient damsel hung her lamp on high:
True to the signal, by love's meteor led,
Leander hasten'd to his Hero's bed.§

## LETTER XXV.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *June* 30, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—When I was in town last month, I partly engaged that I would some time do myself the honour to write to you on the subject of natural history; and I am the

* *Gryllus campestris.*

† In hot summer nights, woodlarks soar to a prodigious height, and hang singing in the air.

‡ The light of the female glow-worm (as she often crawls up the stalk of a grass to make herself more conspicuous) is a signal to the male, which is a slender dusky *scarabæus.*

§ See the story of Hero and Leander.

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more ready to fulfil my promise, because I see you are a gentleman of great candour, and one that will make allowances, especially where the writer professes to be an out-door naturalist, one that takes his observations from the subject itself, and not from the writings of others.

*The following is a List of the Summer Birds of Passage which I have discovered in this neighbourhood, ranged somewhat in the order in which they appear.**

| | RAII NOMINA. | USUALLY APPEARS ABOUT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Wryneck, | *Jynx, sive torquilla.* | The middle of March: harsh note. |
| 2. Smallest willow-wren, | *Regulus non cristatus.* | March 23: chirps till September. |
| 3. Swallow, | *Hirundo domestica.* | April 13. |
| 4. Martin, | *Hirundo rustica.* | Ditto. |
| 5. Sand-martin, | *Hirundo riparia.* | Ditto. |
| 6. Blackcap. | *Atricapilla.* | Ditto: a sweet wild note. |
| 7. Nightingale, | *Luscinia.* | Beginning of April. |
| 8. Cuckoo, | *Cuculus.* | Middle of April. |
| 9. Middle willow-wren, | *Regulus non cristatus.* | Ditto: a sweet plaintive note. |
| 10. White-throat, | *Ficedulæ affinis.* | Do.: mean note; sings on till September. |
| 11. Redstart, | *Ruticilla.* | Ditto: more agreeable song. |
| 12. Stone curlew, | *Œdicnemus.* | End of March: loud nocturnal whistle. |
| 13. Turtle-dove, | *Turtur.* | |
| 14. Grasshopper-lark, | *Alauda minima, locustæ voce.* | Middle of April: a small sibilous note, till the end of July. |
| 15. Swift. | *Hirundo apus.* | About April 27. |
| 16. Less reed-sparrow, | *Passer arundinaceus minor.* | A sweet polyglot, but hurrying: it has the notes of many birds. |

* It is very pleasing to see the accuracy of Mr. White's list of summer and winter birds of passage as he discovered them in his own neighbourhood. The following may comprehend all those which have hitherto been discovered in his county, and in the list are included the permanent residents and occasional visitors:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Summer visitors . . . . . | 33 |
| Winter do. . . . . | 30 |
| Permanent residents . . . . | 63 |
| Occasional do. . . . . | 82 |
| Total . . | 208 |

—Ed.

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| | RAII NOMINA. | USUALLY APPEARS ABOUT |
|---|---|---|
| 17. Landrail, | *Ortygometra.* | A loud harsh note, crex, crex. |
| 18. Largest willow-wren, | *Regulus non cristatus.* | *Cantat voce striduld locustæ:* end of April, on the tops of high beeches. |
| 19. Goat-sucker, or fern-owl, | *Caprimulgus.* | Beginning of May: chatters by night with a singular noise. |
| 20. Fly-catcher, | *Stoparola.* | May 12. A very mute bird: this is the latest summer bird of passage. |

This assemblage of curious and amusing birds belongs to ten several genera of the Linnæan system; and are all of the *ordo* of *passeres*, save the *jynx* and *cuculus*, which are *picæ*, and the *charadrius* (*œdicnemus*) and *rallus* (*ortygometra*), which are *grallæ*.

These birds, as they stand numerically, belong to the following Linnæan genera:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1, | *Jynx.* | 13, *Columba.* |
| 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18, | *Motacilla.* | 17, *Rallus.* |
| 3, 4, 5, 15, | *Hirundo.* | 19, *Caprimulgus.* |
| 8, | *Cuculus.* | 14, *Alauda.* |
| 12, | *Charadrius.* | 20, *Muscicapa.* |

Most soft-billed birds live on insects, and not on grain and seeds, and therefore at the end of summer they retire; but the following soft-billed birds, though insect eaters, stay with us the year round:—

| | RAII NOMINA. | |
|---|---|---|
| Red-breast, | *Rubecula.* | These frequent houses; and haunt out-buildings in the winter: eat spiders. |
| Wren, | *Passer troglodytes.* | |
| Hedge-sparrow, | *Curruca.* | Haunt sinks, for crumbs and other sweepings. |
| White-wagtail, | *Motacilla alba.* | These frequent shallow rivulets, near the spring heads, where they never freeze: eat the aureliæ of Phryganea. The smallest birds that walk. |
| Yellow-wagtail, | *Motacilla flava.* | |
| Grey-wagtail, | *Motacilla cinerea.* | |
| Wheatear, | *Œnanthe.* | Some of these are to be seen with us the winter through. |

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| | RAII NOMINA. | |
|---|---|---|
| Whin-chat, | *Œnanthe secunda.* | |
| Stone-chatter, | *Œnanthe tertia.* | |
| Golden-crowned wren, | *Regulus cristatus.* | This is the smallest British bird: haunts the tops of tall trees; stays the winter through. |

*A List of the Winter Birds of Passage round this neighbourhood, ranged somewhat in the order in which they appear.*

| | RAII NOMINA. | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Ring-ousel, | *Merula torquata.* | This is a new migration, which I have lately discovered about Michaelmas week, and again about the fourteenth of March. |
| 2. Redwing, | *Turdus iliacus.* | About old Michaelmas. |
| 3. Fieldfare, | *Turdus pilaris.* | Though a percher by day, roosts on the ground. |
| 4. Royston-crow, | *Cornix cinerea.* | Most frequently on downs. |
| 5. Woodcock, | *Scolopax.* | Appears about old Michaelmas. |
| 6. Snipe, | *Gallinago minor.* | Some snipes constantly breed with us. |
| 7. Jack-snipe, | *Gallinago minima.* | |
| 8. Wood-pigeon, | *Œnas.* | Seldom appears till late; not in such plenty as formerly. |
| 9. Wild-swan, | *Cygnus ferus.* | On some large waters. |
| 10. Wild-goose, | *Anser ferus.* | |
| 11. Wild-duck, | *Anas torquata minor.* | On our lakes and streams. |
| 12. Pochard, | *Anas fera fusca.* | |
| 13. Widgeon, | *Penelope.* | |
| 14. Teal, breeds with us in Wolmer Forest. | *Querquedula.* | |
| 15. Crossbeak, | *Coccothraustes.* | |
| 16. Crossbill, | *Loxia.* | |
| 17. Silk-tail, | *Garrulus Bohemicus.* | These are only wanderers that appear occasionally, and are not observant of any regular migration. |

These birds, as they stand numerically, belong to the following Linnæan genera:—

| | |
|---|---|
| 1, 2, 3, | *Turdus.* |
| 4, | *Corvus.* |
| 5, 6, 7, | *Scolopax.* |
| 8, | *Columba.* |
| 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, | *Anas.* |
| 15, 16, | *Loxia.* |
| 17, | *Ampelis.* |

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Birds that sing in the night are but few :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Nightingale, | *Luscinia.* | "In shadiest covert hid."—Milton. |
| Woodlark, | *Alauda arborea.* | Suspended in mid air. |
| Less reed-sparrow, | *Passer arundinaceus minor.* | Among reeds and willows. |

I should now proceed to such birds as continue to sing after midsummer; but as they are rather numerous, they would exceed the bounds of this paper; besides, as this is now the season for remarking on that subject, I am willing to repeat my observations on some birds, concerning the continuation of whose song I seem at present to have some doubt.

## LETTER XXVI.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

Selborne, *Aug.* 30, 1769.

Dear Sir,—It gives me satisfaction to find that my account of the ousel migration pleases you. You put a very shrewd question when you ask me how I know that their autumnal migration is southward. Were not candour and openness the very life of natural history, I should pass over this query just as a sly commentator does over a crabbed passage in a classic; but common ingenuousness obliges me to confess, not without some degree of shame, that I only reasoned in that case from analogy. For, as all other autumnal birds migrate from the northward to us, to partake of our milder winters, and return to the northward again, when the rigorous cold abates, so I concluded that the ring-ousels did the same, as well as their congeners, the fieldfares; and especially as ring-ousels are known to haunt cold mountainous countries: but I have good reason to suspect since, that they may come to us from the westward; because I hear from very good authority, that they breed on Dartmoor; and that they forsake that wild district about the time that our visitors appear, and do not return till late in the spring.

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I have taken a great deal of pains about your salicaria and mine, with a white stroke over its eye, and a tawny rump. I have surveyed it alive and dead, and have procured several specimens; and am perfectly persuaded myself (and trust you will soon be convinced of the same) that it is no more nor less than the *passer arundinaceus minor* of Ray.* This bird, by some means or other, seems to be entirely omitted in the *British Zoology;* and one reason probably was, because it is so strangely classed by Ray, who ranges it among his *pici affines.* It ought, no doubt, to have gone among his *aviculæ caudâ unicolore*, and among your slender-billed small birds of the same division. Linnæus might, with great propriety, have put it into his genus of *motacilla;* and the *motacilla salicaria* of his *fauna suecica* seems to come the nearest to it. It is no uncommon bird, haunting the sides of ponds and rivers, where there is covert, and the reeds and sedges of moors. The country people in some places call it the *sedge-bird.* It sings incessantly, night and day, during the breeding time, imitating the note of a sparrow, a swallow, a skylark; and has a strange hurrying manner in its song. My specimens correspond most minutely to the description of your *fen salicaria* shot near Revesby. Mr. Ray has given an excellent characteristic of it when he says, *Rostrum et pedes in hâc aviculâ multò majores sunt quàm pro corporis ratione.* The beak and feet of this bird are too large for the proportions of the rest of the body.

I have got you the egg of an *œdicnemus*, or stone curlew, which was picked up in a fallow on the naked ground: there were two; but the finder inadvertently crushed one with his foot before he saw them.

When I wrote to you last year on reptiles, I wish I had not forgot to mention the faculty that snakes have of stinking in self-defence. I knew a gentleman who kept a tame snake, which was in its person as sweet as any animal, while in good humour and unalarmed; but, as soon as a stranger, or a dog or cat, came in, it fell to hissing, and filled the room with such nauseous effluvia, as rendered it hardly supportable. Thus the squnck, or stonck, of Ray's *Synop.*

* See Letter xxiv. p. 82.



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*Quadr.* is an innocuous and sweet animal; but, when pressed hard by dogs and men, it can eject such a most pestilent and fetid smell and excrement, that nothing can be more horrible.*

A gentleman sent me lately a fine specimen of the *lanius minor cinerascens cum maculâ in scapulis albâ, Raii;* Ray's lesser butcher-bird, ash-coloured, with a white spot at the insertion of the wings; which is a bird that, at the time of your publishing your two first volumes of *British Zoology*, I find you had not seen. You have described it well from Edwards's drawing.

## LETTER XXVII.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 2, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—When I did myself the honour to write to you, about the end of last June, on the subject of natural history, I sent you a list of the summer birds of passage which I have observed in this neighbourhood, and also a list of the winter birds of passage; I mentioned, besides, those soft-billed birds that stay with us the winter through in the south of England, and those that are remarkable for singing in the night.

According to my proposal, I shall now proceed to such birds (singing birds, strictly so called) as continue in full song till after midsummer, and shall range them somewhat in the order in which they first begin to open as the spring advances.

RAII NOMINA.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Woodlark, | *Alauda arborea.* | In January, and continues to sing through all the summer and autumn. |

* It was formerly very much the custom with the young gentlemen of Eton College (and may be so still) to keep snakes which they trained and often carried about with them. They would eat bread and milk, and were perfectly sweet, except when irritated, and then they stunk, as Mr. White remarks, *Se defendendo.*—ED.

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| | RAII NOMINA. | |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Song-thrush, | *Turdus simpliciter dictus.* | In February, and on to August; re-assume their song in autumn. |
| 3. Wren, | *Passer troglodytes.* | All the year, hard frost excepted. |
| 4. Red-breast, | *Rubecula.* | Ditto. |
| 5. Hedge-sparrow, | *Curruca.* | Early in February, to July the 10th. |
| 6. Yellow-hammer, | *Emberiza flava.* | Early in February, and on through July to August the 21st. |
| 7. Skylark, | *Alauda vulgaris.* | In February, and on to October. |
| 8. Swallow, | *Hirundo domestica.* | From April to September. |
| 9. Black-cap, | *Atricapilla.* | Beginning of April to July the 13th. |
| 10. Titlark, | *Alauda pratorum.* | From middle of April to July the 16th. |
| 11. Blackbird, | *Merula vulgaris.* | Sometimes in February and March, and so on to July the 23d; re-assumes in autumn. |
| 12. White-throat, | *Ficedulæ affinis.* | In April, and on to July the 23rd. |
| 13. Goldfinch, | *Carduelis.* | April, and through to September the 16th. |
| 14. Greenfinch, | *Chloris.* | On to July and August the 2nd. |
| 15. Less reed-sparrow, | *Passer arundinaceus minor,* | May, on to beginning of July. |
| 16. Common linnet, | *Linaria vulgaris.* | Breeds and whistles on till August; re-assumes its note when they begin to congregate in October, and again early before the flocks separate. |

Birds that cease to be in full song, and are usually silent at or before midsummer:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17. Middle willow-wren, | *Regulus non cristatus.* | Middle of June; begins in April. |
| 18. Redstart, | *Ruticilla.* | Ditto; begins in May. |
| 19. Chaffinch, | *Fringilla.* | Beginning of June; sings first in February. |
| 20. Nightingale, | *Luscinia.* | Middle of June; sings first in April. |



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Birds that sing for a short time, and very early in the spring:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 21. Missel-bird, | *Turdus viscivorus.* | January the 2nd, 1770, in February. Is called in Hampshire and Sussex the storm-cock, because its song is supposed to forebode windy wet weather; is the largest singing bird we have. |
| 22. Great titmouse, or ox-eye, | *Fringilla jo.* | In February, March, April; re-assumes for a short time in September. |

Birds that have somewhat of a note or song, and yet are hardly to be called singing birds:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 23. Golden-crowned wren, | *Regulus cristatus.* | Its note as minute as its person; frequents the tops of high oaks and firs; the smallest British bird. |
| 24. Marsh titmouse, | *Parus palustris.* | Haunts great woods; two harsh sharp notes. |
| 25. Small willow-wren, | *Regulus non cristatus.* | Sings in March and on to September. |
| 26. Largest ditto, | *Ditto.* | *Cantat voce stridula locustæ;* from end of April to August. |
| 27. Grasshopper-lark, | *Alauda minima voce locustæ.* | Chirps all night, from the middle of April to the end of July. |
| 28. Martin, | *Hirundo agrestis.* | All the breeding time; from May to September. |
| 29. Bullfinch, | *Pyrrhula.* | |
| 30. Bunting, | *Emberiza alba.* | From the end of January to July. |

All singing birds, and those that have any pretensions to song, not only in Britain, but perhaps the world through, come under the Linnæan *ordo* of *passeres.*

The above-mentioned birds, as they stand numerically, belong to the following Linnæan genera:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1, 7, 10, 27, | *Alauda.* | 8, 28, | *Hirundo.* |
| 2, 11, 21, | *Turdus.* | 13, 16, 19, | *Fringilla.* |
| 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, | *Motacilla.* | 22, 24, | *Parus.* |
| 6, 30, | *Emberiza.* | 14, 29, | *Loxia.* |

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Birds that sing as they fly are but few :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Skylark, | *Alauda vulgaris.* | Rising, suspended, and falling. |
| Titlark, | *Alauda pratorum.* | In its descent; also sitting on trees, and walking on the ground. |
| Woodlark, | *Alauda arborea.* | Suspended; in hot summer nights all night long. |
| Blackbird, | *Merula.* | Sometimes from bush to bush. |
| Whitethroat, | *Ficedulæ affinis.* | Uses, when singing on the wing, odd jerks and gesticulations. |
| Swallow, | *Hirundo domestica.* | In soft sunny weather. |
| Wren, | *Passer troglodytes.* | Sometimes from bush to bush. |

Birds that breed most early in these parts :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Raven, | *Corvus.* | Hatches in February and March. |
| Song-thrush, | *Turdus.* | In March. |
| Blackbird, | *Merula.* | In March. |
| Rook, | *Cornix frugilega.* | Builds the beginning of March. |
| Woodlark, | *Alauda arborea.* | Hatches in April. |
| Ringdove, | *Palumbus torquatus.* | Lays the beginning of April. |

All birds that continue in full song till after midsummer, appear to me to breed more than once.

Most kinds of birds seem to me to be wild and shy, somewhat in proportion to their bulk: I mean in this island, where they are much pursued and annoyed; but in Ascension Island, and many other desolate places, mariners have found fowls so unacquainted with a human figure, that they would stand still to be taken, as is the case with boobies, &c. As an example of what is advanced, I remark that the golden-crested wren, (the smallest British bird,) will stand unconcerned till you come within three or four yards of it, while the bustard (*otis*,) the largest British land fowl, does not care to admit a person within so many furlongs.

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## LETTER XXVIII.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Dec.* 8, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—I was much gratified by your communicative letter on your return from Scotland, where you spent, I find, some considerable time, and gave yourself good room to examine the natural curiosities of that extensive kingdom, both those of the islands, as well as those of the Highlands. The usual bane of such expeditions is hurry; because men seldom allot themselves half the time they should do; but, fixing on a day for their return, post from place to place, rather as if they were on a journey that required dispatch, than as philosophers investigating the works of nature. You must have made, no doubt, many discoveries, and laid up a good fund of materials for a future edition of the *British Zoology*, and will have no reason to repent that you have bestowed so much pains on a part of Great Britain that perhaps was never so well examined before.

It has always been matter of wonder to me, that fieldfares which are so congenerous to thrushes and blackbirds, should never choose to breed in England: but that they should not think even the Highlands cold, and northerly, and sequestered enough, is a circumstance still more strange and wonderful. The ring-ousel, you find, stays in Scotland the whole year round; so that we have reason to conclude that those migrators that visit us for a short space every autumn, do not come from thence.

And here, I think, will be the proper place to mention, that those birds were most punctual again in their migration this autumn, appearing, as before, about the 30th of September; but their flocks were larger than common, and their stay protracted somewhat beyond the usual time. If they came to spend the whole winter with us, as some of their congeners do, and then left us, as they do, in spring, I should not be so much struck with the occurrence, since it

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would be similar to that of the other winter birds of passage; but when I see them for a fortnight at Michaelmas, and again for about a week in the middle of April, I am seized with wonder, and long to be informed whence these travellers come, and whither they go, since they seem to use our hills merely as an inn, or baiting place.

Your account of the greater brambling, or snow-fleck, is very amusing; and strange it is that such a short-winged bird should delight in such perilous voyages over the northern ocean! Some country people in the winter time have every now and then told me that they have seen two or three white larks on our downs; but, on considering the matter, I begin to suspect that these are some stragglers of the birds we are talking of, which sometimes, perhaps, may rove so far to the southward.*

It pleases me to find that white hares are so frequent on the Scottish mountains, and especially as you inform me that it is a distinct species; for the quadrupeds of Britain are so few, that every new species is a great acquisition.

The eagle-owl,† could it be proved to belong to us, is so majestic a bird, that it would grace our *fauna* much. I never was informed before where wild geese are known to breed.‡

You admit, I find, that I have proved your *fen salicaria* to be the lesser reed-sparrow of Ray; and I think you may be secure that I am right; for I took very particular pains to clear up that matter, and had some fair specimens; but as they were not well preserved they are decayed already. You will, no doubt, insert it in its proper place in your next edition. Your additional plates will much improve your work.

* In the snow-fleck, which is now separated from the buntings, and, with the Lapland finch, forms the genus *plectrophanes* of Meyer and modern ornithologists, the wings are of considerable length, fitting them for more extensive journeys than the true emberizæ.—W. J.

† This is now admitted into the British Fauna, having been killed at different times in various parts of Great Britain.—W. J. Mr. Bennett says it has been shot in Yorkshire and Suffolk as well as in Scotland.

‡ Under the term "wild geese," four or five species are generally included. They used to breed in the fens of Lincolnshire, but improvements in agriculture have driven them from that locality. They now probably breed much in Sweden, but not far inland.—Ed.

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De Buffon, I know, has described the water shrew-mouse; but still I am pleased to find you have discovered it in Lincolnshire, for the reason I have given in the article of the white hare.*

As a neighbour was lately ploughing in a dry chalky field, far removed from any water, he turned out a water-rat, that was curiously laid up in an hybernaculum, artificially formed of grass and leaves. At one end of the burrow lay about a gallon of potatoes, regularly stowed, on which it was to have supported itself for the winter. But the difficulty with me is how this *amphibius mus* came to fix its winter station at such a distance from the water. Was it determined in its choice of that place by the mere accident of finding the potatoes which were planted there? or is it the constant practice of the aquatic rat to forsake the neighbourhood of the water in the colder months?

Though I delight very little in analogous reasoning, knowing how fallacious it is with respect to natural history; yet in the following instance I cannot help being inclined to think it may conduce towards the explanation of a difficulty that I have mentioned before with respect to the invariable early retreat of the *hirundo apus*, or swift, so many weeks before its congeners; and that not only with us, but also in Andalusia, where they begin to retire about the beginning of August.

The great large bat† (which, by the by, is at present a nondescript in England, and what I have never been able yet to procure) retires or migrates very early in the summer: it also ranges very high for its food, feeding in a different

* *Lepus variabilis.*—W. J.

† The little bat appears almost every month in the year; but I have never seen the large ones till the end of April, nor after July. They are most common in June, but never in any plenty: are a rare species with us.

The great bat, *vespertilio noctula* or *altivolans*, certainly winters in England, as they have been found in winter in old buildings near Kingston-on-Thames, and at Wimbledon. They congregate, in summer at least, for a flock of from twelve to fifteen of them were seen to take possession of an old tree in Hampton Court gardens in which was a nest of young starlings, nearly fledged. These the bats soon destroyed and probably fed on. I turned them out of the tree several times in the day-time, but they invariably returned to it for three weeks, when they finally abandoned it. They fled high in the day-time although the sun was shining.—Ed.

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THE RAT. (*Mus decumanus.*)

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region of the air; and that is the reason I never could procure one.* Now, this is exactly the case with the swifts; for they take their food in a more exalted region than the other species, and are very seldom seen hawking for flies near the ground, or over the surface of the water. From hence I would conclude, that these *hirundines*, and the larger bats, are supported by some sorts of high-flying gnats, scarabs, or *phalænæ*, that are of short continuance, and that the short stay of these strangers is regulated by the defect of their food.

By my journal it appears that curlews clamoured on to October the thirty-first, since which I have not seen or heard any. Swallows were observed on to November the third.

## LETTER XXIX.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 15, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—It was no small matter of satisfaction to me to find that you were not displeased with my little *methodus*, or systematic table of birds. If there was any merit in the sketch, it must be owing to its punctuality. For many months I carried a list in my pocket of the birds that were to be remarked, and as I rode or walked about my business, I noted each day the continuance or omission of each bird's song, so that I am as sure of the certainty of my facts as a man can be of any transaction whatsoever.

I shall now proceed to answer the several queries which you put in your two obliging letters, in the best manner that I am able. Perhaps Eastwick, and its environs, where you heard so very few birds, is not a woodland country, and, therefore, not stocked with such songsters. If you will cast

* Mr. White has the merit of first noticing this species in England: it is the *vespertilio noctula* of Dr. Fleming, and said by that naturalist to winter in Italy.—W. J.

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your eye on my last letter, you will find that many species continued to warble after the beginning of July.

The titlark and yellow-hammer breed late, the latter very late; and, therefore, it is no wonder that they protract their song; for I lay it down as a maxim in ornithology, that as long as there is any incubation going on, there is music. As to the red-breast and wren, it is well known to the most incurious observer that they whistle the year round, hard frost excepted; especially the latter.

It was not in my power to procure you a black-cap, or a less reed-sparrow, or sedge-bird, alive. As the first is undoubtedly, and the last, as far as I can yet see, a summer bird of passage, they would require more nice and curious management in a cage than I should be able to give them: they are both distinguished songsters. The note of the former has such a wild sweetness that it always brings to my mind those lines in a song in "As You Like It:"—

> And tune his merry note
> Unto the *wild* bird's throat.

The latter has a surprising variety of notes, resembling the song of several other birds; but then it has also a hurrying manner, not at all to its advantage. It is, notwithstanding, a delicate polyglot.

It is new to me that titlarks in cages sing in the night; perhaps only caged birds do so. I once knew a tame red-breast in a cage that always sang as long as candles were in the room; but in their wild state no one supposes they sing in the night.

I should be almost ready to doubt the fact, that there are to be seen much fewer birds in July than in any former month, notwithstanding so many young are hatched daily. Sure I am, that it is far otherwise with respect to the swallow tribe, which increases prodigiously as the summer advances; and I saw at the time mentioned, many hundreds of young wagtails on the banks of the Cherwell, which almost covered the meadows. If the matter appears, as you say, in the other species, may it not be owing to the dams being engaged in incubation, while the young are concealed by the leaves?

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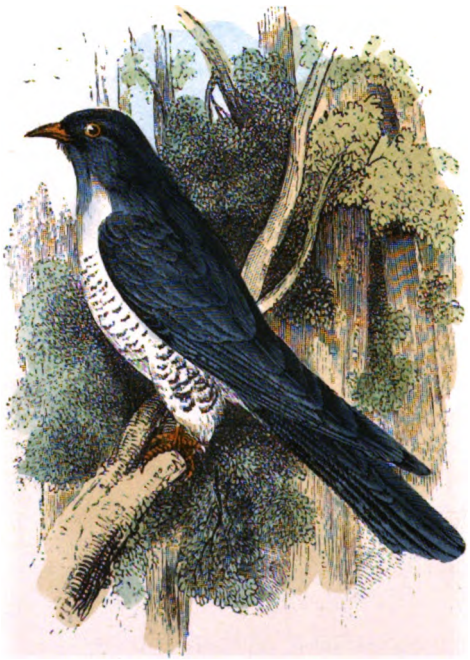

THE CUCKOO

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Many times have I had the curiosity to open the stomachs of woodcocks and snipes; but nothing ever occurred that helped to explain to me what their subsistence might be; all that I could ever find was a soft mucus, among which lay many pellucid small gravels.

## LETTER XXX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 19, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—Your observation, that "the cuckoo does not deposit its egg indiscriminately in the nest of the first bird that comes in its way, but probably looks out a nurse in some degree congenerous, with whom to entrust its young,"* is perfectly new to me; and struck me so forcibly, that I naturally fell into a train of thought that led me to consider whether the fact were so, and what reason there was for it. When I came to recollect and inquire, I could not find that any cuckoo had ever been seen in these parts, except in the nest of the wagtail, the hedge-sparrow, the titlark, the white-throat and the red-breast, all soft-billed insectivorous birds. The excellent Mr. Willughby mentions the nest of the *palumbus*, (ring-dove,) and of the *fringilla*, (chaffinch,) birds that subsist on acorns and grains, and such hard food; but then he does not mention them as of his own knowledge; but says afterwards, that he saw himself a wagtail feeding a cuckoo. It appears hardly possible that a soft-billed bird

* Providence, or rather the great Creator, who does everything for the best, has so ordained it that the cuckoo only deposits its eggs in those nests in which the young will be fed with the food most congenial with their nature, in fact in those of birds strictly insectivorous. It is a curious fact, and one I believe not hitherto noticed by naturalists, that the cuckoo deposits its egg in the nest of the titlark, robin, wagtail, &c., by means of its foot. If the bird sat on the nest while the egg was laid, the weight of its body would crush the nest, and cause it to be forsaken, and thus one of the ends of Providence would be defeated. I have found the eggs of a cuckoo in the nest of a white-throat, built in so small a hole in a garden wall that it was absolutely impossible for the cuckoo to have got into it.—ED.

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should subsist on the same food with the hard-billed; for the former have thin membranaceous stomachs suited to their soft food; while the latter, the granivorous tribe, have strong muscular gizzards, which, like mills, grind, by the help of small gravels and pebbles, what is swallowed. This proceeding of the cuckoo, of dropping its eggs as it were by chance, is such a monstrous outrage on maternal affection, one of the first great dictates of nature, and such a violence on instinct, that had it only been related of a bird in the Brazils or Peru, it would never have merited our belief.* But yet, should it farther appear that this simple bird, when divested of that natural στοργὴ that seems to raise the kind in general above themselves, and inspire them with extraordinary degrees of cunning and address, may be still endued with a more enlarged faculty of discerning what species are suitable and congenerous nursing mothers for its disregarded eggs and young, and may deposit them only under their care, this would be adding wonder to wonder, and instancing, in a fresh manner, that the methods of Providence are not subjected to any mode or rule, but astonish us in new lights, and in various and changeable appearances.

What was said by a very ancient and sublime writer concerning the defect of natural affection in the ostrich, may be well applied to the bird we are talking of:—

"She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers:

"Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding." †

*Query.* Does each female cuckoo lay but one egg in a season, or does she drop several in different nests, according as opportunity offers? ‡

* If the cuckoo made a nest as other birds do, and fed and brought up its young in the usual way, would not the harsh note of the male bird lead to the easy discovery of the nest, and thus the breed might be extinguished?—Ed.

† Job xxxix. 16, 17.

‡ It is now known from the examination of the *ovarium*, that the cuckoo lays several eggs.—Ed.

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## LETTER XXXI.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 22, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—Hedge-hogs * abound in my gardens and fields. The manner in which they eat the roots of the plantain in my grass walks is very curious: with their upper mandible, which is much longer than their lower, they bore under the plant, and so eat the root off upwards, leaving the tuft of leaves untouched. In this respect they are serviceable, as they destroy a very troublesome weed: but they deface the walks in some measure by digging little round holes. It appears, by the dung that they drop upon th turf, that beetles are no inconsiderable part of their food. In June last, I procured a litter of four or five young hedgehogs, which appeared to be about five or six days old; they, I find, like puppies, are born blind, and could not see when they came to my hands.† No doubt their spines are soft and flexible at the time of their birth, or else the poor dam would have but a bad time of it in the critical moment of parturition: but it is plain that they soon harden; for these little pigs had such stiff prickles on their backs and sides, as would easily have fetched blood, had they not been handled with caution. Their spines are quite white at this age; and they have little hanging ears, which I do not remember

* The hedge-hog feeds indiscriminately on flesh and vegetables, is very fond of eggs, doing considerable mischief by destroying game during the breeding season. It will even enter a hen-house, and, when within its reach, will turn off the hens, and devour the eggs. They are frequently caught in traps, baited with eggs, for the carrion crows. They are easily tamed, and become very familiar in a state of confinement; will eat bread, potatoes, fruit, flesh—raw or cooked—without any apparent choice.—W. J. They will soon learn to distinguish the person by whom they are fed, and will uncoil themselves at the sound of his voice.—W. C. T.

† The young are frequently detected and killed by keepers. The incessant cry they make for their mother when hungry, leads to their discovery. I am assured that the old hedge-hogs hunt eagerly for cockchafers which have dropped from the oaks in Richmond park.—ED.

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to be discernible in the old ones. They can, in part, at this age, draw their skin down over their faces; but are not able to contract themselves into a ball, as they do, for the sake of defence, when full grown. The reason, I suppose, is, because the curious muscle, that enables the creature to roll itself up in a ball, was not then arrived at its full tone and firmness. Hedge-hogs make a deep and warm hybernaculum with leaves and moss, in which they conceal themselves for the winter; but I never could find that they stored in any winter provision, as some quadrupeds certainly do.

I have discovered an anecdote with respect to the fieldfare (*turdus pilaris*), which, I think, is particular enough: this bird, though it sits on trees in the day-time, and procures the greatest part of its food from white-thorn hedges; yea, moreover, builds on very high trees, as may be seen by the *fauna suecica;* yet always appears with us to roost on the ground. They are seen to come in flocks just before it is dark, and to settle and nestle among the heath in our forest. And besides, the larkers, in dragging their nets by night, frequently catch them in the wheat-stubbles; while the bat fowlers, who take many red-wings in the hedges, never entangle any of this species. Why these birds, in the matter of roosting, should differ from all their congeners, and from themselves, also, with respect to their proceedings by day, is a fact for which I am by no means able to account.

I have somewhat to inform you of concerning the moose-deer; but, in general, foreign animals fall seldom in my way; my little intelligence is confined to the narrow sphere of my own observations at home.

## LETTER XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *March*, 1770.

ON Michaelmas-day, 1768, I managed to get a sight of the female moose belonging to the Duke of Richmond, at Goodwood; but was greatly disappointed, when I arrived at the spot, to find that it had died, after having appeared in a languishing way for some time, on the morning before.

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However, understanding that it was not stripped, I proceeded to examine this rare quadruped: I found it in an old greenhouse, slung under the belly and chin by ropes, and in a standing posture; but, though it had been dead for so short a time, it was in so putrid a state that the stench was hardly supportable. The grand distinction between this deer, and any other species that I have ever met with, consisted in the strange length of its legs; on which it was tilted up much in the manner of the birds of the *grallæ* order. I measured it as they do a horse, and found that, from the ground to the wither, it was just five feet four inches; which height answers exactly to sixteen hands, a growth that few horses arrive at: but then, with this length of legs, its neck was remarkably short, no more than twelve inches; so that, by straddling with one foot forward and the other backward, it grazed on the plain ground, with the greatest difficulty, between its legs: the ears were vast and lopping, and as long as the neck; the head was about twenty inches long, and ass-like; and had such a redundancy of upper lip as I never saw before, with huge nostrils. This lip, travellers say, is esteemed a dainty dish in North America.* It is very reasonable to suppose, that this creature supports itself chiefly by browsing off trees, and by wading after water plants; towards which way of livelihood the length of legs and great lips must contribute much. I have read somewhere, that it delights in eating the *nymphæa*, or water-lily. From the fore-feet to the belly, behind the shoulder, it measured three feet and eight inches; the length of the legs, before and behind, consisted a great deal in the *tibia*, which was strangely long; but, in my haste to get out of the stench, I forgot to measure that joint exactly. Its scut seemed to be about an inch long: the colour was a grizzly black; the mane about four inches long; the fore-hoofs were upright and shapely, the hind flat and splayed. The spring before, it was only two years old, so that, most probably, it was not then come to its growth. What a vast tall beast

* The legs of the moose are so long, and the neck so short, that they are unable to graze on level ground, like other animals, but are obliged to browse on the tops of large plants, and the leaves of trees in the summer; and in winter they feed on the tops of willows, and the small branches of the birch-tree.—Ed.

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must a full-grown stag be! I have been told some arrive at ten feet and a half! This poor creature had at first a female companion of the same species, which died the spring before. In the same garden was a young stag, or red-deer, between whom and this moose it was hoped that there might have been a breed; but their inequality of height must have always been a bar to any commerce of the amorous kind. I should have been glad to have examined the teeth, tongue, lips, hoofs, &c., minutely; but the putrefaction precluded all farther curiosity. This animal, the keeper told me, seemed to enjoy itself best in the extreme frost of the former winter. In the house, they showed me the horn of a male moose, which had no front antlers, but only a broad palm, with some snags on the edge. The noble owner of the dead moose proposed to make a skeleton of her bones.

Please to let me hear if my female moose corresponds with that you saw; and whether you think still that the American moose and European elk are the same creature.

## LETTER XXXIII.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *April* 12, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—I heard many birds of several species sing last year after midsummer; enough to prove that the summer solstice is not the period that puts a stop to the music of the woods. The yellow-hammer, no doubt, persists with more steadiness than any other; but the wood-lark, the wren, the red-breast, the swallow, the white-throat, the goldfinch, the common linnet, are all undoubted instances of the truth of what I advanced.

If this severe season does not interrupt the regularity of the summer migrations, the black-cap will be here in two or three days.* I wish it was in my power to procure you one

* Through the attention of W. Carruthers, Esq., of Dormont, I have lately received the black-cap, with some others of our summer birds, from Madeira, where it is probable they partly retire, on leaving their breeding places.—W. J.

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of those songsters; but I am no bird-catcher; and so little used to birds in a cage, that I fear, if I had one, it would soon die for want of skill in feeding.

Was your reed-sparrow, which you kept in a cage, the thick billed reed-sparrow of the *Zoology*, p. 320; or was it the less reed-sparrow of Ray, the sedge-bird of Mr. Pennant's last publication, p. 16?

As to the matter of long-billed birds growing fatter in moderate frosts, I have no doubt within myself what should be the reason. The thriving at those times appears to me to arise altogether from the gentle check which the cold throws upon insensible perspiration. The case is just the same with blackbirds, &c.; and farmers and warreners observe, the first, that their hogs fat more kindly at such times; and the latter, that their rabbits are never in such good case as in a gentle frost. But, when frosts are severe and of long continuance, the case is soon altered; for then a want of food soon overbalances the repletion occasioned by a checked perspiration. I have observed, moreover, that some human constitutions are more inclined to plumpness in winter than in summer.

When birds come to suffer by severe frost, I find that the first that fail and die are the red-wing fieldfares, and then the song-thrushes.

You wonder, with good reason, that the hedge-sparrows, &c., can be induced at all to sit on the egg of the cuckoo, without being scandalised at the vast disproportioned size of the supposititious egg; but the brute creation, I suppose, have very little idea of size, colour, or number.* For the common hen, I know, when the fury of incubation is on her, will sit on a single shapeless stone, instead of a nest full of eggs that have been withdrawn; and moreover, a hen turkey, in the same circumstances, would sit on in the empty nest till she perished with hunger.

I think the matter might easily be determined whether a cuckoo lays one or two eggs, or more, in a season, by open-

* By a wise provision of nature, and to prevent the very circumstance which Mr. White here notices, we find the egg of the cuckoo scarcely larger that that of the common chaffinch.—W. J.

But the young cuckoo is, beyond all doubt, larger than the birds that are usually found in the same nest.—W. C. T.



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ing a female during the laying time. If more than one were come down out of the ovary, and advanced to a good size, doubtless, then, she would that spring lay more than one.*

I will endeavour to get a hen, and examine.

Your supposition that there may be some natural obstruction in singing birds while they are mute, and that when this is removed the song recommences, is new and bold. I wish you could discover some good grounds for this suspicion.

I was glad you were pleased with my specimen of the *caprimulgus*, or fern-owl: you were, I find, acquainted with the bird before.

When we meet, I shall be glad to have some conversation with you concerning the proposal you make of my drawing up an account of the animals in this neighbourhood. Your partiality towards my small abilities persuades you, I fear, that I am able to do more than is in my power; for it is no small undertaking for a man, unsupported and alone, to begin a natural history from his own autopsia. Though there is endless room for observation in the field of nature, which is boundless, yet investigation (where a man endeavours to be sure of his facts) can make but slow progress; and all that one could collect in many years would go into a very narrow compass.

Some extracts from your ingenious "Investigations of the difference between the present temperature of the air in Italy," &c., have fallen in my way, and given me great satisfaction. They have removed the objection that always arose in my mind whenever I came to the passages which you quote. Surely the judicious Virgil, when writing a didactic poem for the region of Italy, could never think of describing freezing rivers, unless such severity of weather pretty frequently occurred!

P.S. Swallows appear amidst snows and frost.

* It may be mentioned in confirmation of the idea of their laying more than one egg, that the American cuckoos deposit several.—Ed.

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## LETTER XXXIV.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *May* 12, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—Last month we had such a series of cold turbulent weather, such a constant succession of frost, and snow, and hail, and tempest, that the regular migration, or appearance of the summer birds, was much interrupted. Some did not show themselves (at least were not heard) till weeks after their usual time, as the black-cap and white-throat; and some have not been heard yet, as the grasshopper-lark and largest willow-wren. As to the fly-catcher, I have not seen it; it is, indeed, one of the latest, but should appear about this time; and yet, amidst all this meteorous strife and war of the elements, two swallows discovered themselves as long ago as the eleventh of April, in frost and snow: but they withdrew quickly, and were not visible again for many days.* House-martins, which are always more backward than swallows, were not observed till May came in.

Among the *monogamous* birds, several are to be found, after pairing time, single and of each sex; but whether this state of celibacy is matter of choice or necessity is not so easily discoverable. When the house-sparrows deprive my martins of their nests, as soon as I cause one to be shot, the other, be it cock or hen, presently procures a mate, and so for several times following.†

I have known a dove-house infested by a pair of white owls, which made great havoc among the young pigeons:

* It is certain that swallows re-migrate; that is, if on some of them arriving in this country the weather is ungenial, they leave it again for a short time. So in the autumnal migrations, swallows, after their flight, will return again to this country if they meet in their passage with adverse winds or storms. An observant naturalist residing near Liverpool has assured me of this fact.—ED.

† The celerity with which birds find mates after a male or female has been shot, is very extraordinary. I have observed this among pigeons more particularly.—ED.



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one of the owls was shot as soon as possible; but the survivor readily found a mate, and the mischief went on. After some time the new pair were both destroyed, and the annoyance ceased.

Another instance I remember of a sportsman, whose zeal for the increase of his game being greater than his humanity, after pairing time, he always shot the cock-bird of every couple of partridges upon his grounds: supposing that the rivalry of many males interrupted the breed. He used to say, that though he had widowed the same hen several times, yet he found she was still provided with a fresh paramour, that did not take her away from her usual haunt.

Again: I knew a lover of setting, an old sportsman, who has often told me that, soon after harvest, he has frequently taken small coveys of partridges consisting of cock-birds alone: these he pleasantly used to call old bachelors.

There is a propensity belonging to common house cats that is very remarkable: I mean their violent fondness for fish, which appears to be their most favourite food; and yet nature, in this instance, seems to have planted in them an appetite that, unassisted, they know not how to gratify: for of all quadrupeds, cats are the least disposed towards water; and will not, when they can avoid it, deign to wet a foot, much less to plunge into that element.*

* In the *Library of Entertaining Knowledge*, on the authority of Dr. Darwin, cats fish: he says, "Mr. Leonard, a very intelligent friend of mine, saw a cat catch a trout, by darting upon it in a deep clear water, at the mill at Wcaford, near Lichfield. The cat belonged to Mr. Stanley, who had often seen her catch fish in the same manner in summer, when the mill-pool was drawn so low that the fish could be seen. I have heard of other cats taking fish in shallow water, as they stood on the bank. This seems to be a natural method of taking their prey, usually lost by domestication, though they all retain a strong relish for fish." The Rev. W. Bingley mentions another instance of a cat freely taking the water, related by his friend Mr. Bill, of Christchurch. When he lived at Wallington, near Carshalton, in Surrey, he had a cat that was often known to plunge, without hesitation, into the river Wandle, and swim over to an island at a little distance from the bank. To this there could be no other inducement than the fish she might catch on her passage, or the vermin that the island afforded.—W. J.

"These are curious instances," says the editor of the *London Literary Gazette*, in reviewing a former edition of this volume, "but the following, which may be depended upon as a fact, is still more remarkable. At Caverton Mill, in Roxburghshire, a beautiful spot upon Kale Water, there was a favourite cat, domesticated in the dwelling-house, which stood at two or three

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Quadrupeds that prey on fish are amphibious; such is the otter, which by nature is so well formed for diving, that it makes great havoc among the inhabitants of the waters. Not supposing that we had any of those beasts in our shallow brooks, I was much pleased to see a male otter brought to me, weighing twenty-one pounds, that had been shot on the bank of our stream, below the Priory, where the rivulet divides the parish of Selborne from Harteleywood.

## LETTER XXXV.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *May* 21, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—The severity and turbulence of last month so interrupted the regular process of summer migration, that some of the birds do but just begin to show themselves, and others are apparently thinner than usual; as the white-throat, the black-cap, the red-start, the fly-catcher. I well remember that, after the very severe spring in the year 1739-40, summer birds of passage were very scarce. They come probably hither with a south-east wind, or when it blows between those points; but, in that unfavourable year, the winds blew the whole spring and summer through from the opposite quarters. And yet, amidst all these disadvantages, two swallows, as I mentioned in my last, appeared this year as early as the 11th of April, amidst frost and snow; but they withdrew again for a time.

hundred yards from the mill. When the mill-work ceased, the water was, as usual, stopped at the dam-head, and the dam below consequently ran gradually more shallow, often leaving trout, which had ascended when it was full, to struggle back with difficulty to the parent stream; and so well acquainted had puss become with this circumstance, and so fond was puss of fish, the moment the noise of the mill-clapper ceased, she used to scamper off to the dam, and, up to her belly in water, continue to catch fish like an otter. It would not be very easy to cite a more curious case of animal instinct approaching to reason, and overcoming the usual habits of the species."

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I am not pleased to find that some people seem so little satisfied with Scopoli's new publication.* There is room to expect great things from the hands of that man, who is a good naturalist; and one would think that a history of the birds of so distant and southern a region as Carniola would be new and interesting. I could wish to see that work, and hope to get it sent down. Dr. Scopoli is physician to the wretches that work in the quicksilver mines of that district.

When you talked of keeping a reed-sparrow, and giving it seeds, I could not help wondering; because the reed-sparrow† which I mentioned to you (*passer arundinaceus minor*, Raii) is a soft-billed bird, and most probably migrates hence before winter; whereas the bird you kept (*passer torquatus*, Raii)‡ abides all the year, and is a thick-billed bird. I question whether the latter be much of a songster; but in this matter I want to be better informed. The former has a variety of hurrying notes, and sings all night. Some part of the song of the former, I suspect, is attributed to the latter. We have plenty of the soft-billed sort, which Mr. Pennant had entirely left out of his *British Zoology*, till I reminded him of his omission. See *British Zoology* last published, p. 16.§

I have somewhat to advance on the different manners in which different birds fly and walk; but as this is a subject that I have not enough considered, and is of such a nature as not to be contained in a small space, I shall say nothing farther about it at present.‖

No doubt the reason why the sex of birds in their first plumage¶ is so difficult to be distinguished is, as you say, "because they are not to pair and discharge their parental functions till the ensuing spring." As colours seem to be

* This work he calls his "*Annus Primus Historico-Naturalis*,"—"First Annual of Natural History," is probably the most intelligible translation of the title.

† The Sedge-warbler (*Salicaria phragmitis*).

‡ The Reed-bunting (*Emberiza schæniclus*).

§ See Letter XXVI. To Thomas Pennant, Esq.

¶ See Letter LXXIV. To the Hon. Daines Barrington.

‖ If the young had their full plumage the first year, or when they quitted their nest, they would in their then feeble state be more exposed to be killed by birds of prey, and other casualties. It seems therefore a benevolent design of Providence that the more humble plumage should remain on them till they are more able to protect themselves.—Ed.

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the chief external sexual distinction in many birds, these colours do not take place till sexual attachments begin to obtain. And the case is the same in quadrupeds, among whom, in their younger days, the sexes differ but little; but, as they advance to maturity, horns and shaggy manes, beards and brawny necks, &c., &c., strongly discriminate the male from the female. We may instance still farther in our own species, where a beard and stronger features are usually characteristic of the male sex; but this sexual diversity does not take place in earlier life; for a beautiful youth shall be so like a beautiful girl, that the difference shall not be discernible:—

> Quem si puellarum insereres choro,
> Mirè sagaces falleret hospites
> Discrimen obscurum, solutis
> Crinibus, ambiguóque vultu."—HOR.
>
> If he were by girls surrounded,
> Strangers soon would be confounded:
> Manhood's form could no one trace
> In his beardless female face.

## LETTER XXXVI.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Aug.* 1, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—The French, I think, in general, are strangely prolix in their natural history. What Linnæus says with respect to insects holds good in every other branch: "*Verbositas præsentis sæculi, calamitas artis.*"

Pray how do you approve of Scopoli's new work? As I admire his *Entomologia*, I long to see it.

I forgot to mention in my last letter (and had not room to insert in the former) that the male moose, in rutting time, swims from island to island, in the lakes and rivers of North America, in pursuit of the females. My friend, the chaplain, saw one killed in the water, as it was on that errand, in the river St. Lawrence: it was a monstrous beast, he told me; but he did not take the dimensions.

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When I was last in town, our friend Mr. Barrington most obligingly carried me to see many curious sights. As you were then writing to him about horns, he carried me to see many strange and wonderful specimens. There is, I remember, at Lord Pembroke's, at Wilton, a horn-room furnished with more than thirty different pairs; but I have not seen that house lately.

Mr. Barrington showed me many astonishing collections of stuffed and living birds from all quarters of the world. After I had studied over the latter for a time, I remarked that every species almost, that came from distant regions, such as South America, the coast of Guinea, &c., were thick-billed birds, of the *loxia* and *fringilla* genera; and no *motacillæ* or *muscicapidæ*,* were to be met with. When I came to consider, the reason was obvious enough; for the hard-billed birds subsist on seeds which are easily carried on board, while the soft-billed birds, which are supported by worms and insects, or, what is a succedaneum for them, fresh raw meat, can meet with neither in long and tedious voyages. It is from this defect of food that our collections (curious as they are,) are defective, and we are deprived of some of the most delicate and lively genera.

## LETTER XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 14, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—You saw, I find, the ring-ousels again among their native crags; and are farther assured that they continue resident in those cold regions the whole year. From whence then do our ring-ousels migrate so regularly every September, and make their appearance again, as if in their return, every April? They are more early this year than

* This collection must have been very limited, and, of course, the conclusions erroneously drawn from a few species. The *muscicapidæ* and *sylviadæ* abound in all South America.—W. J.

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common, for some were seen at the usual hill on the fourth of this month.

An observing Devonshire gentleman tells me, that they frequent some parts of Dartmoor, and breed there, but leave those haunts about the end of September, or beginning of October, and return again about the end of March.

Another intelligent person assures me, that they breed in great abundance all over the Peak of Derby, and are called there tor-ousels, withdraw in October and November, and return in spring. This information seems to throw some light on my new migration.

Scopoli's new work * (which I have just procured), has its merits, in ascertaining many of the birds of the Tyrol and Carniola. Monographers, come from whence they may, have, I think, fair pretence to challenge some regard and approbation from the lovers of natural history; for, as no man can alone investigate all the works of nature, these partial writers may, each in his department, be more accurate in their discoveries, and freer from errors, than more general writers, and so by degrees may pave the way to an universal correct natural history. Not that Scopoli is so circumstantial and attentive to the life and conversation of his birds as I could wish: he advances some false facts; as when he says of the *hirundo urbica*, that, "*pullos extra nidum non nutrit.*" This assertion I know to be wrong, from repeated observation this summer; for house-martins do feed their young flying, though, it must be acknowledged, not so commonly as the house-swallow; and the feat is done in so quick a manner as not to be perceptible to indifferent observers. He also advances some (I was going to say) improbable facts; as when he says of the woodcock that "*pullos rostro portat fugiens ab hoste,*"—flying from the enemy it carries its young in its beak.† But candour forbids me to say absolutely that any fact is false because I have never been

* *Annus Primus Historico-Naturalis.*

† It is an undoubted fact, of which I have had ample proof, that when woodcocks breed in this country, they deposit their eggs on some dry bank, and as soon as the young are hatched they are conveyed to the nearest swamp, or wet place, where food can be procured. I am assured that this is done by means of the beak of the old birds. I have the authority of the keeper of a friend of mine, who saw this mode of conveyance practiced.—Ed.

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witness to such a fact. I have only to remark, that the long unwieldy bill of the woodcock is, perhaps, the worst adapted of any among the winged creation for such a feat of natural affection.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

RIGMER, near LEWES, *October* 8, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—I am glad to hear that Kuekalm is to furnish you with the birds of Jamaica. A sight of the *hirundines* of that hot and distant island would be a great entertainment to me.

The *Anni* of Scopoli are now in my possession; and I have read the *Annus Primus* with satisfaction; for, though some parts of this work are exceptionable, and he may advance some mistaken observations, yet the ornithology of so distant a country as Carniola is very curious. Men that undertake only one district, are much more likely to advance natural knowledge, than those that grasp at more than they can possibly be acquainted with. Every kingdom, every province, should have its own monographer.

The reason perhaps, why he mentions nothing of Ray's *Ornithology*, may be the extreme poverty and distance of his country, into which the works of our great naturalists may have never yet found their way. You have doubts, I know, whether this *Ornithology* is genuine, and really the work of Scopoli: as to myself, I think I discover strong tokens of authenticity; the style corresponds with that of his *Entomology;* and his characters of his Ordines and Genera are many of them new, expressive, and masterly. He has ventured to alter some of the Linnæan genera, with sufficient show of reason.

It might, perhaps, be mere accident that you saw so many swifts and no swallows at Staines; because, in my long observation of those birds, I never could discover the least degree of rivalry or hostility between the species.*

* There are few birds which appear to possess less of angry passions than

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Ray remarks, that birds of the *gallinæ* order, as cocks and hens, partridges and pheasants, &c., are *pulveratrices*, such as dust themselves, using that method of cleansing their feathers, and ridding themselves of their vermin. As far as I can observe, many birds that dust themselves never wash; and I once thought that those birds that wash themselves would never dust: but here I find myself mistaken; for common house-sparrows are great *pulveratrices*, being frequently seen grovelling and wallowing in dusty roads; and yet they are great washers. Does not the skylark dust?

*Query.* Might not Mahomet and his followers take one method of purification from these *pulveratrices?* because I find, from travellers of credit, that if a strict Mussulman is journeying in a sandy desert, where no water is to be found, at stated hours he strips off his clothes, and most scrupulously rubs his body over with sand or dust.

A countryman told me he had found a young fern-owl in the nest of a small bird on the ground: and that it was fed by the little bird. I went to see this extraordinary phenomenon, and found that it was a young cuckoo hatched in the nest of a titlark; it was become vastly too big for its nest, appearing

> ——————— in tenui re
> Majores pennas nido extendisse."
>
> Though by poverty depress'd,
> Spreading its wings beyond the nest;

and was very fierce and pugnacious, pursuing my finger, as I teased it, for many feet from the nest, and sparring and buffeting with its wings like a game-cock. The dupe of a dam appeared at a distance, hovering about with meat in its mouth, and expressing the greatest solicitude.

the swallow. Although it "twitters sweetly," there is in its song no appearance of emulation. On the contrary it seems to proceed from feelings of happiness and complacency, which cannot be mistaken. I like to watch it darting now and then to its nest, and uttering that little note of love which is responded to by the female while she is performing her task of incubation. And then to see its airy evolutions!

> "I delight to see
> How suddenly he skims the glassy pool,
> How quaintly dips, and with an arrow's speed
> Whisks by. I love to be awake, and hear
> His morning song twitter'd to dawning day."—*Hurdis.* Ed.

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In July, I saw several cuckoos skimming over a large pond; and found, after some observation, that they were feeding on the *libellulæ*, or dragon-flies, some of which they caught as they settled on the weeds, and some as they were on the wing. Notwithstanding what Linnæus says, I cannot be induced to believe that they are birds of prey.

This district affords some birds that are hardly ever heard of at Selborne. In the first place, considerable flocks of cross-beaks (*loxiæ curvirostræ,*) have appeared this summer in the pine groves belonging to this house;* the water-ousel

* The species of cross-bills are only three in number. One *loxia curvirostra*, pays frequent visits, in flocks of from ten to eighty or a hundred in number, during the winter. The *loxia pityopsittacus* has only been once recorded as a native of this country, from a specimen killed in Ross-shire, and now in my possession; it can, therefore, only be ranked as an occasional visitant: it is a native of Germany and North America. The third species, *loxia falcirostra*, also a native of North America, has once been shot within two miles of Belfast, Ireland,—the only authenticated instance of its visiting our coasts. In a late number of the *Zoological Journal*, Mr. Yarrel (whom we have already had occasion to mention as a most persevering naturalist), has supplied some very interesting facts regarding the formation and direction of the beak of the common cross-bill, and which, we think, are here worthy of notice:—"The beak of the cross-bill is altogether unique in its form; the mandibles do not lie upon each other, with their lateral edges in opposition, as in other birds, but curve to the right and left, and always in opposite directions to each other. In some specimens, the upper mandibles curve downwards and to the left; the under portion turned upwards, and to the right. When holding the head of this bird in my fingers, I found I could bring the under mandible in a line underneath, and touching the point of the upper, but not beyond it, towards the left side; while, on its own side, the point passed with ease to the distance of 3-8th of an inch. The upper mandible has a limited degree of motion on the cranium, the superior maxillary and nasal bones being united to the frontal by flexible bony laminæ.

"The form as well as the magnitude of the processes of some of the bones of the head are also peculiar to this bird. The pterygoid processes of the palatine bones are considerably elongated downwards, to afford space for the insertion of the large pterygoid muscles. The *os omoideum* on each side is strongly articulated to the *os quadratum*, affording firm support to the upper mandible. The jugal bone is united to the superior maxillary bone in front—is firmly attached by its posterior extremity to the outer side of the *os quadratum:* when, therefore, the *os quadratum* is pulled upwards and forwards by its own peculiar muscles, the jugal bone on each side, by its pressure forwards, elevates the upper mandible.

"The inferior projecting process of the *os quadratum*, to which the lower jaw is articulated, in most other birds is somewhat linear from before backwards, and compressed at the sides, admitting vertical motion only upwards and

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THE CROSSBILL.

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is said to haunt the mouth of the Lewes river, near Newhaven; and the Cornish chough builds, I know, all along the chalky cliffs of the Sussex shore.

I was greatly pleased to see little parties of ring-ousels

downwards; the same process in the cross-bill is spherical. The cavity in the lower jaw, destined to receive this process, is a hollow circular cup. The union of these two portions, therefore, forms an articulation possessing the universal motion and flexibility of the mechanical ball-and-socket joint. The lower jaw is of great strength, the sides or plates elevated, with prominent coronoid processes, to which, as well as to the whole outer sides of the plates, the temporal muscle is attached; and in a head of this bird, which had been divested of all the soft parts, I found, on sliding the lower laterally upon the upper, as performed by the bird, that, before the coronoid process is brought into contact with the pterygoid, on its own side, the extreme points of the mandibles were separated laterally to the extent I have already mentioned of 3-8ths of an inch. The temporal and pyramidal muscles on the right side of the head (that being the side to which the lower jaw inclined,) were considerably larger than those of the left, and indicated by their bulk the great lateral power this bird is capable of exerting, to be hereafter noticed. The unusually large size of the pterygoid muscles, on each side, was very conspicuous, the space for them being obtained by the great distance to which the articulated extremities of the lower jaw were removed; and the food of the bird being small seeds, rendered a narrow pharynx sufficient for the purpose of swallowing. The muscles depressing the lower mandible are three in number, only one of which, the greater pyramidal, is visible. This strong muscle covers two other small ones, the triangular and square muscles, so called from their particular shape. These three muscles, all of which have their origin in the occipital portion of the cranium, are inserted by strong tendons on the under and back of each extremity of the lower jaw, behind the centre of motion, and, consequently, by their simultaneous contraction, raise the point to which they are attached, and depress the anterior part of the mandible. The lower portions of the *ossa quadrata* are pushed somewhat forwards by this compression, assisted by two small muscles; one of these, a small flat muscle, arises from the septum of the orbits, behind the small aperture observed in the septum, and passes downwards to be inserted upon the projecting styloid process of the *os quadratum*. The second is a small pyramidal-shaped muscle, arising also from the septum, anterior to the other muscle, and, passing downwards and backwards, is inserted upon the *omoideum*, both by their contraction pulling the *os quadratum* forwards, and thus elevating the other mandible. The depressors of the lower jaw, and the elevators of the upper, therefore, act together to separate the mandibles. To close the mandibles, the temporal and pterygoid muscles elevate the lower jaw, assisted by slender slips, which, extending forwards to the superior maxillary bones, act in concert, by bringing them down. When the lateral motion is required, the great pyramidal muscle on the right side pulls the extremity of the lower jaw, to which it is attached, backwards, the pterygoid muscles on the left side at the same time powerfully assisting, by carrying that side of the lower jaw inwards."

Mr. Yarrel next goes on to explain the use of the tongue. Their food is

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(my newly-discovered migrators), scattered, at intervals, all along the Sussex downs from Chichester to Lewes. Let them come from whence they will, it looks very suspicious that they are cantoned all along the coast, in order to pass the Channel, when severe weather advances. They visit us again in April, as it should seem, in their return, and are not to be found in the dead of winter. It is remarkable that they are very tame, and seem to have no manner of apprehensions of danger from a person with a gun. There are bustards on the wide downs near Brighthelmstone. No doubt you are acquainted with the Sussex downs. The prospects and rides round Lewes are most lovely.

As I rode along near the coast I kept a very sharp look-out in the lanes and woods, hoping I might, at this time of the year, have discovered some of the summer short-winged birds of passage crowding towards the coast, in order for

the seeds of the different fir-cones ; and their mode of operation, when proceeding to extract them, is this :—They first fix themselves across the cone ; then, bringing the points of the maxilla from their crossed or lateral position to lie immediately over each other, in this reduced compass they insinuate their beaks between the scales, and then opening them, not in the usual manner, but by drawing the inferior maxilla sideways, force open the scales. Mr. Yarrel then proceeds :—"At this stage of the proceeding, the aid of the tongue becomes necessary, and this organ is no less admirably adapted for the service required. The *os hyoides*, or bone of the tongue, has articulated to its anterior extremity an additional portion, formed partly of bone, with a horny covering. In shape it is narrow, about 3-8ths of an inch in length, and extends downwards and forwards, the sides curved upwards, the distal extremity shaped like a scoop, somewhat pointed and thin on both edges, the proximal extremity ending in two small processes, elongated upwards and backwards above the articulation with the bone of the tongue, each process having inserted upon it a slender muscle extending backwards to the glottis, and attached to the *os hyoides*, which muscles, by their contraction, extend and raise the scoop-like point ; underneath the articulation of this horny and grooved appendage is another small muscle, which is attached at one extremity to the *os hyoides*, at the other to the moveable piece, and, by its action, as an antagonist to the upper muscles, bends the point downwards and backwards ; while, therefore, the point of the beak presses the shell from the body of the cone, the tongue, brought forward by its own muscle (*genio-hyoideus*), is enabled, by the additional muscles described, to direct and insert its cutting scoop underneath the seed, and the food thus dislodged is transferred to the mouth ; and, when the mandibles are separated laterally in this operation, the bird has an uninterrupted view of the seed in the cavity, with the eye on that side to which the under mandible is curved."

For farther information consult *Zoological Journal*, vol. iv. p. 459.—W. J.

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their departure; but it was very extraordinary that I never saw a red-start, white-throat, black-cap, uncrested wren, fly-catcher, &c.; and I remember to have made the same remark in former years, as I usually come to this place annually about this time. The birds most common along the coast, at present, are the stone-chatters, whin-chats, buntings, linnets, some few wheat-ears, titlarks, &c. Swallows and house-martins abound yet, induced to prolong their stay by this soft, still, dry season.

A land-tortoise, which has been kept for thirty years in a little walled court belonging to the house where I am now visiting, retires under ground about the middle of November, and comes forth again about the middle of April. When it first appears in the spring, it discovers very little inclination towards food, but in the height of summer grows voracious, and then, as the summer declines, its appetite declines; so that for the last six weeks in autumn it hardly eats at all. Milky plants, such as lettuces, dandelions, sow-thistles, are its favourite dish. In a neighbouring village one was kept till, by tradition, it was supposed to be an hundred years old, —an instance of vast longevity in such a poor reptile!

## LETTER XXXIX.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Oct.* 29, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—After an ineffectual search in Linnæus, Brisson, &c., I begin to suspect that I discern my brother's *hirundo hyberna* in Scopoli's new-discovered *hirundo rupestris*, p. 167. His description of "*Supra murina, subtus albida; tectrices maculâ ovali albâ in latere interno; pedes nudi, nigri; rostrum nigrum; remiges obscuriores quam plumæ dorsales; rectrices remigibus concolores; caudâ emarginatâ nec forcipatâ*," agrees very well with the bird in question; but when he comes to advance that it is "*statura hirundinis urbicæ*," and that "*definito hirundinis riparicæ Linnæi huic quoque convenit*," he, in some measure, invalidates all he has said;

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at least, he shows at once that he compares them to these species merely from memory; for I have compared the birds themselves, and find they differ widely in every circumstance of shape, size, and colour. However, as you will have a specimen, I shall be glad to hear what your judgment is in the matter.

Whether my brother is forestalled in his nondescript or not, he will have the credit of first discovering that they spend their winters under the warm and sheltery shores of Gibraltar and Barbary.

Scopoli's characters of his Ordines and Genera are clear, just, and expressive, and much in the spirit of Linnæus. These few remarks are the result of my first perusal of Scopoli's *Annus Primus*.

The bane of our science is the comparing one animal to the other by memory. For want of caution in this particular, Scopoli falls into errors. He is not so full with regard to the manners of his indigenous birds as might be wished, as you justly observe: his Latin is easy, elegant, and expressive, and very superior to Kramer's.*

## LETTER XL.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 26, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—I was much pleased to see, among the collection of birds from Gibraltar, some of those short-winged English summer birds of passage, concerning whose departure we have made so much inquiry. Now, if these birds are found, in Andalusia, to migrate to and from Barbary, it may easily be supposed that those that come to us may migrate back to the continent, and spend their winters in some of the warmer parts of Europe. This is certain, that many soft-billed birds that come to Gibraltar appear there only in spring and

* See his *Elenchus Vegetabilium et Animalium per Austriam Inferiorem, &c.*,—"Summary of Vegetables and Animals in Lower Austria."

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autumn, seeming to advance in pairs towards the northward, for the sake of breeding during the summer months, and retiring in parties and broods towards the south at the decline of the year; so that the rock of Gibraltar is the great rendezvous and place of observation, from whence they take their departure each way towards Europe or Africa. It is therefore no mean discovery, I think, to find that our small short-winged summer birds of passage are to be seen, spring and autumn, on the very skirts of Europe;—it is a presumptive proof of their emigrations.

Scopoli seems to me to have found the *hirundo melba* (the great Gibraltar swift) in Tyrol, without knowing it. For what is the *hirundo alpina*, but the aforementioned bird in other words? Says he, "*Omnia prioris* (meaning the swift) *sed pectus album; paulo major priore.*" "All the marks of the former but the white breast; a little larger than the former." I do not suppose this to be a new species. It is true also of the melba, that "*nidificat in excelsis Alpium rupibus,*"—It builds its nest in the lofty cliffs of the Alps. Vid. *Annum Primum.*

My Sussex friend, a man of observation and good sense, but no naturalist, to whom I applied on account of the stone curlew (*oedicnemus*), sends me the following account:—"In looking over my Naturalist's Journal for the month of April, I find the stone curlews are first mentioned on the 17th and 18th, which date seems to me rather late. They live with us all the spring and summer, and at the beginning of autumn prepare to take leave, by getting together in flocks. They seem to me a bird of passage that may travel into some dry hilly country south of us, probably Spain, because of the abundance of sheep-walks in that country; for they spend their summers with us in such districts. This conjecture I hazard, as I have never met with any one that has seen them in England in the winter. I believe they are not fond of going near the water, but feed on earth-worms, that are common on sheep-walks and downs. They breed on fallows and lay-fields abounding with grey mossy flints, which much resemble their young in colour, among which they skulk and conceal themselves. They make no nest, but lay their eggs on the bare ground, producing in common but two at a time. There is reason to think their young run soon after they are



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hatched, and that the old ones do not feed them, but only lead them about at the time of feeding, which, for the most part, is in the night." Thus far my friend.

In the manners of this bird, you see, there is something very analogous to the bustard, whom it also somewhat resembles in aspect and make, and in the structure of its feet.

For a long time I have desired my relation to look out for these birds in Andalusia; and now he writes me word that, for the first time, he saw one dead in the market on the 3rd of September.

When the *oedicnemus* flies, it stretches out its legs straight behind, like a heron.

## LETTER XLI.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Dec.* 20, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—The birds that I took for aberdavines were reed-sparrows (*passeres torquati*).

There are, doubtless, many home internal migrations within this kingdom that want to be better understood; witness those vast flocks of hen chaffinches that appear with us in the winter without hardly any cocks among them. Now, were there a due proportion of each sex, it would seem very improbable that any one district should produce such numbers of these little birds, and much more when only one half of the species appears; therefore we may conclude that the *fringillæ cœlebes*, for some good purposes, have a peculiar migration of their own, in which the sexes part. Nor should it seem so wonderful that the intercourse of sexes in this species of birds should be interrupted in winter; since in many animals, and particularly in bucks and does, the sexes herd separately, except at the season when commerce is necessary for the continuance of the breed. For this matter of the chaffinches, see *Fauna Suecica*, p. 85, and *Systema*

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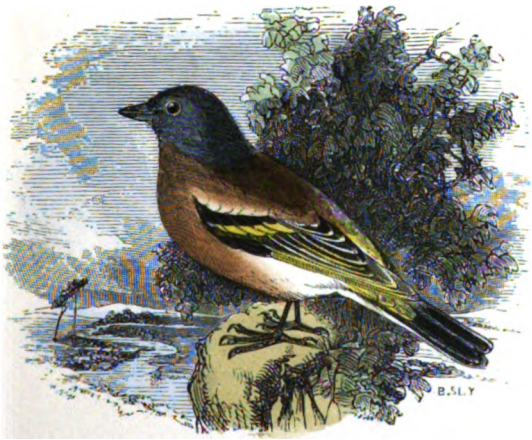

THE CHAFFINCH. (*Fringilla coelebs.*)

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*Naturæ*, p. 318. I see every winter vast flights of hen chaffinches, but none of cocks.*

Your method of accounting for the periodical motions of

* Amongst our vernal birds of passage, the cock birds generally arrive about a fortnight before the hens, a circumstance well known to the bird-catchers, who are certain that all which are caught out of the first flight will prove males. The cock nightingales generally appear in the neighbourhood of London on the 12th of April. They are sometimes taken a few days earlier, but that is the day upon which those who make a trade of catching them depend upon their arrival.

It is very difficult to understand the reason of this precession of the males. It has been supposed by some writers, that the females were delayed by the care of a young brood; but it seems to me nearly certain that our summer birds do not breed again when they visit Africa during our winter months. Those who have been accustomed to keep nightingales in confinement know, that one which has been taken from the nest before it could fly, and reared in a cage, will never sing the true song of its species, unless it have the advantage of hearing an old nightingale sing throughout the autumn and winter; that a young nightingale caught in the summer after the old birds have begun to moult and ceased singing, will sing rather more correctly than that which was taken from the nest, because it has had the advantage of hearing the notes of its parent longer; but that, without further education under an old male in autumn and winter, it will only be able to execute parts of the nightingale's beautiful melody, and will repeat too often some of the loud notes, and harp upon them in a manner that is quite disagreeable. These two classes of young birds seldom become good songsters in confinement; because, unless a considerable number of old nightingales are kept in the same room with them, they have not the same opportunity of hearing and learning that they would have had in the woods; and if any other birds are kept within hearing, they will imitate their notes, and retain the habit of singing them. The old nightingales cease to sing in England for the most part towards the end of June, and after that time the young ones can have no farther opportunity of learning their song while they remain in Europe; they merely record, or practise in the throat, what they can recollect.

I may take this opportunity of making some further remarks on the acquisition of song or peculiar notes by young birds. The nightingale, which far surpasses all other birds in the natural modulation and variety of its notes, and cannot be equalled by any in execution, even if they have learned its song, is peculiarly apt in its first year, when confined, to learn the song of any other bird that it hears. Its beautiful song is the result of long attention to the melody of the older birds of its species. The young whinchat, wheatear, and others of the genus *Saxicola*, which have little natural variety of song, are no less ready in confinement to learn from other species, and become as much better songsters as the nightingale degenerates, by borrowing from others. The bullfinch, whose natural notes are weak, harsh, and insignificant, has a greater facility than any other bird of learning human music. It is pretty evident that the Germans, who bring vast numbers of them to London which



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the British singing birds, or birds of flight, is a very probable one, since the matter of food is a great regulator of the actions and proceedings of the brute creation: there is but one that can be set in competition with it, and that is love. But I cannot quite acquiesce with you in one circumstance,

they have taught to pipe, must have instructed them more by whistling to them, than by an organ; and that their instructions have been accompanied by a motion of the head and body in accordance with the time: which habit the birds also acquire, and is no doubt of great use to them in regulating their song. The canary-bird, whose song, in its artificial state in Europe, is a compound of notes acquired from other birds, is able to learn the song of the nightingale, but not to execute it with the same power as the nightingale itself. I have never heard one that sang it quite correctly, but I have heard it approach quite enough to prove that with more careful education it might learn it right. Those who have taken the most pains about it have been contented with placing, under nightingales, young canaries, as soon as they could feed themselves; but such will necessarily have learned part at least of their parents' song. The linnet and linnet mule is said to be able to come nearer the execution of the nightingale, when properly instructed. The best way would be to use an experienced hen canary-bird who will rear her young without the cock, and to take the cock away before the young are hatched: or to set the canary-eggs under a hen paired with a goldfinch, which, kept in a darkish situation, will probably not sing; to remove the cock, at all events, if it sings, as soon as possible; to place the young birds very close to the singing nightingale, and as soon as practicable to remove the hen canary also. The rearing of a canary-bird by hand, even from the egg, has been accomplished by artificial heat and unremitting care. Birds learn the song of others most readily when they are not in song themselves, and when they are darkened and covered, so that their attention is not distracted; for birds are amused by what they see as much as we are, when not alarmed by it. I had once a tame whitethroat which, when let out of its cage, appeared to take the greatest pleasure in minutely examining the figured patterns of the chair-covers, perhaps expecting to find something eatable amongst the leaves and branches of the pattern. I reared a blackcap and some whitethroats, taken when a fortnight old, under a singing nightingale, and removed all other singing birds: they did not, however, learn a single note from the nightingale, but sang their wild note pretty truly; on the other hand, a blackcap two years old, from hearing a nightingale sing a great deal, acquired two passages from its song and executed them correctly, though not very powerfully. I understand that the robin reared in a cage is not observed to learn from other birds, but sings the wild note pretty accurately. I can at present suggest no key to these diversities; nor do I understand why the young nightingale, taken when the old birds cease to sing, will in confinement learn the note of other birds and retain them, although it may hear its own species sing again as soon as they recommence in the autumn; and yet, at liberty, with the same cessation of the parental song, it would have learned nothing else; unless it be that from want of other amusement it listens more when it is confined.—W. H.

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when you advance that, "When they have thus feasted, they again separate into small parties of five or six, and get the best fare they can within a certain district, having no inducement to go in quest of fresh-turned earth." Now, if you mean that the business of congregating is quite at an end from the conclusion of wheat-sowing, to the season of barley and oats, it is not the case with us; for larks and chaffinches, and particularly linnets, flock and congregate as much in the very dead of winter as when the husbandman is busy with his ploughs and harrows.

Sure there can be no doubt but that woodcocks and fieldfares leave us in the spring, in order to cross the seas, and to retire to some districts more suitable to the purpose of breeding. That the former pair before they retire, and that the hens are forward with egg, I myself, when I was a sportsman, have often experienced. It cannot be denied but that now and then we hear of a woodcock's nest,* or young birds, discovered in some part or other of this island; but then they are always mentioned as rarities, and somewhat out of the common course of things; but as to redwings and fieldfares, no sportsman or naturalist has ever yet, that I could hear, pretended to have found the nest or young of those species in any part of these kingdoms. And I the more admire at this instance as extraordinary, since, to all appearance, the same food, in summer as well as in winter, might support them here which maintains their congeners, the blackbirds and thrushes, did they choose to stay the summer through. From hence it appears, that it is not food alone which determines some species of birds with regard to their stay or departure. Fieldfares and redwings disappear sooner or later, according as the warm weather comes on earlier or later; for I well remember, after that dreadful winter, 1739-40, that cold north-east winds continued to blow on through April and May, and that these kinds of birds (what few remained of them) did not depart as usual, but were seen lingering about till the beginning of June.

* Woodcocks breed much more frequently in this country than is generally supposed. Several nests are annually found in Sir Charles Taylor's woods, at Hollycombe, in Sussex, and in various parts in England and Scotland.—Ed.

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The best authority that we can have for the nidification of the birds above mentioned, in any district, is the testimony of faunists that have written professedly the natural history of particular countries. Now, as to the fieldfare, Linnæus, in his *Fauna Suecica*, says of it, that "*maximis in arboribus nidificat;*" "it builds in the largest trees." And of the redwing, he says in the same place, that "*nidificat in mediis arbusculis, sive sepibus: ova sex cæruleo-viridia maculis nigris variis.*" "It builds in the midst of shrubs or hedges; it produces six eggs, of a sea-green colour, with varied black spots." Hence we may be assured that fieldfares and redwings breed in Sweden. Scopoli says, in his *Annus Primus*, of the woodcock, that "*nupta ad nos venit circa æquinoctium vernale:*" "when mated, it comes to us about the vernal equinox;" meaning in Tyrol, of which he is a native. And afterwards he adds, "*nidificat in paludibus alpinis: ova ponit* 3—5." "It builds its nest in the Alpine marshes, and lays from three to five eggs." It does not appear from Kramer that woodcocks breed at all in Austria; but he says, "*Avis hæc septentrionalium provinciarum æstivo tempore incola est; ubi plerumque nidificat. Appropinquante hyeme australiores provincias petit: hinc circa plenilunium potissimum mensis Octobris plerumque Austriam transmigrat. Tunc rursus circa plenilunium potissimum mensis Martii per Austriam matrimonio juncta ad septentrionales provincias redit.*" "This bird, in summer, inhabits the northern provinces, where it generally nests. On the approach of winter it seeks more southern provinces; it usually leaves this at the October full-moon, generally in the direction of Austria. Then it returns back, after mating, generally about the March full-moon." For the whole passage (which I have abridged), see Elenchus, &c., p. 351. This seems to be a full proof of the emigration of woodcocks; though little is proved concerning the place of their breeding.*

P.S.—There fell in the county of Rutland, in three weeks of this present very wet weather, seven inches and a half of rain, which is more than has fallen in any three weeks for

* Woodcocks arrive in Silesia about the latter end of April, or beginning of May, and leave it again in October.—W. J.

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these thirty years past, in that part of the world. A mean quantity in that county for one year is twenty inches and a half.

## LETTER XLII.

TO THE SAME.

FYFIELD, near ANDOVER, *Feb.* 12, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—You are, I know, no great friend to migration; and the well-attested accounts from various parts of the kingdom, seem to justify you in your suspicions, that at least many of the swallow kind do not leave us in the winter,* but lay themselves up like insects and bats, in a torpid state, and slumber away the more uncomfortable months, till the return of the sun and fine weather awakens them.

But then we must not, I think, deny migration in general; because migration certainly does subsist in some places, as my brother in Andalusia has fully informed me. Of the motions of these birds he has ocular demonstration, for many weeks together, both spring and fall; during which periods, myriads of the swallow kind traverse the Straits from north to south, and from south to north, according to the season. And these vast migrations consist not only of hirundines, but of bee-birds, hoopoes, *oro pendolos*, or golden thrushes, &c., &c., and also of many of our soft-billed summer birds of passage; and moreover, of birds which never leave us, such as all the various sorts of hawks and kites. Old Belon, two hundred years ago, gives a curious account of the incredible armies of hawks and kites which he saw in the spring time traversing the Thracian Bosphorus, from Asia to Europe. Besides the above mentioned, he remarks that the procession is swelled by whole troops of eagles and vultures.

* See preceding note on this subject, page 89 of this edition.—ED.

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Now, it is no wonder that birds residing in Africa should retreat before the sun as it advances, and retire to milder regions, and especially birds of prey, whose blood being heated with hot animal food, are more impatient of a sultry climate; bnt then I cannot help wondering why kites and hawks, and such hardy birds as are known to defy all the severity of England, and even of Sweden and all north Europe, should want to migrate from the south of Europe, and be dissatisfied with the winters of Andalusia.

It does not appear to me that much stress may be laid on the difficulty and hazard that birds must run in their migrations, by reason of vast oceans, cross winds, &c.; because, if we reflect, a bird may travel from England to the Equator without launching out and exposing itself to boundless seas, and that by crossing the water at Dover, and again at Gibraltar. And I with the more confidence advance this obvious remark, because my brother has always found that some of his birds, and particularly the swallow kind, are very sparing of their pains in crossing the Mediterranean; for when arrived at Gibraltar, they do not,

——— "Ranged in figure, wedge their way
——— and set forth
Their airy caravan, high over seas
Flying, and over lands with mutual wing
Easing their flight;" MILTON.

but scout and hurry along in little detached parties of six or seven in a company; and, sweeping low, just over the surface of the land and water, direct their course to the opposite continent at the narrowest passage they can find. They usually slope across the bay to the south-west, and so pass over opposite to Tangier, which, it seems, is the narrowest space.

In former letters, we have considered, whether it was probable that woodcocks, in moonshiny nights, cross the German Ocean from Scandinavia. As a proof that birds of less speed may pass that sea, considerable as it is, I shall relate the following incident, which, though mentioned to have happened so many years ago, was strictly matter of fact:—As some people were shooting in the parish of

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Trotten, in the county of Sussex, they killed a duck in that dreadful winter, 1708-9, with a silver collar about its neck,* on which were engraven the arms of the King of Denmark. This anecdote the rector of Trotten at that time has often told to a near relation of mine, and to the best of my remembrance, the collar was in the possession of the rector.

At present, I do not know any body near the sea-side that will take the trouble to remark at what time of the moon woodcocks first come: if I lived near the sea myself, I would soon tell you more of the matter. One thing I used to observe when I was a sportsman, that there were times in which woodcocks were so sluggish and sleepy, that they would drop again when flushed just before the spaniels, nay, just at the muzzle of a gun that had been fired at them: whether this strange laziness was the effect of a recent fatiguing journey, I shall not presume to say.

Nightingales not only never reach Northumberland and Scotland, but also, as I have been always told, Devonshire and Cornwall.† In those two last counties, we cannot attribute the failure of them to the want of warmth: the defect in the west is rather a presumptive argument that these birds come over to us from the continent at the narrowest passage, and do not stroll so far westward.

Let me hear from your own observation whether skylarks

* I have read a like anecdote of a swan.

† In a western direction the nightingale visits Dorsetshire and the eastern part only of Devonshire; is never heard in Cornwall; visits Somersetshire, and goes northward on the western side of England as high as Carlisle. On the eastern side it is never heard beyond the city of York, yet visits much higher latitudes on the European continent. Linnæus includes it in his Fauna Succica. Great pains were taken by (I think) Sir John Sinclair to establish the nightingale in Scotland, but without success. An old notion referred to by Montagu, that the nightingale possibly might not be found in any part but where cowslips grow plentifully, seems incorrect: cowslips grow in great luxuriance in Glamorganshire, and also north of Carlisle. A gentleman of Gower, which is the peninsula beyond Swansea, procured from Norfolk and Surrey, a few years back, some scores of young nightingales, hoping that an acquaintance with his beautiful woods and their mild climate would induce a second visit; but the law of Nature was too strong for him, and not a single bird returned. Dyer, in his Grongar Hill, makes the nightingale the companion of his muse in the vale of Towey or Carmarthen, but this is a poetical licence, as this bird is not heard there.—W. Y.

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do not dust. I think they do; and if they do, whether they wash also.*

The *alauda pratensis* of Ray was the poor dupe that was educating the booby of a cuckoo mentioned in my letter of October last.†

Your letter came too late for me to procure a ring-ousel for Mr. Tunstal during their autumnal visit; but I will endeavour to get him one when they call on us again in April. I am glad that you and that gentleman saw my Andalusian birds; I hope they answered your expectation. Royston, or grey crows, are winter birds that come much about the same time with the woodcock: they, like the fieldfare and redwing, have no apparent reason for migration; for, as they fare in the winter like their congeners, so might they, in all appearance, in the summer.‡ Was not Tenant, when a boy, mistaken? Did he not find a missel-thrush's nest, and take it for the nest of a fieldfare?

The stock-dove or wood-pigeon, *œnas* Raii, is the last winter bird of passage which appears with us,§ and is not seen till towards the end of November. About twenty years ago, they abounded in the district of Selborne, and strings of them were seen morning and evening that reached a mile or more; but since the beechen woods have been greatly thinned, they have much decreased in number. The ring-dove, *palumbus* Raii, stays with us the whole year, and breeds several times through the summer.

Before I received your letter of October last, I had just remarked in my journal that the trees were unusually green. This uncommon verdure lasted on late into November, and may be accounted for from a late spring, a cool and moist

* Larks certainly dust, and, in a cage, wash themselves, but I am not aware that they do the latter when in a wild state.—Ed.

† Letter xxxviii. to the Hon. Daines Barrington.

‡ The Royston crow breeds, and is stationary, on all the west coast of Scotland; and it is probable that most of those which visit England during winter, arrive from Sweden and Norway, or the countries adjacent,—few, if any, of the Scotch individuals leaving their regular abodes.—W. J.

§ Here, as in a previous passage, Mr. White has spoken of the wood-pigeon as synonimous with the stock-dove. It is more usual to apply that name to the ring-dove. Perhaps, with the view of avoiding confusion, it would be better that the use of the name wood-pigeon should be altogether abandoned. —Mr. Bennett.

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summer, but more particularly from vast armies of chafers, or tree-beetles, which, in many places, reduced whole woods to a leafless naked state. These trees shot again at midsummer, and then retained their foliage till very late in the year.

My musical friend, at whose house I am now visiting, has tried all the owls that are his near neighbours, with a pitch-pipe set at concert pitch, and finds they all hoot in B flat. He will examine the nightingales next spring.

## LETTER XLIII.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *March* 30, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—There is an insect with us, especially on chalky districts, which is very troublesome and teasing all the latter end of the summer, getting into people's skins, especially those of women and children, and raising tumours which itch intolerably. This animal (which we call an harvest bug) is very minute, scarce discernible to the naked eye, of a bright scarlet colour, and of the genus of *acarus*.* They are to be met with in gardens, on kidney beans, or any legumens, but prevail only in the hot months of summer. Warreners, as some have assured me, are much infested by them on chalky downs, where these insects swarm sometimes to so infinite a degree as to discolour their nets, and to give them a reddish cast; while the men are so bitten as to be thrown into fevers.

There is a small, long, shining fly in these parts, very troublesome to the housewife, by getting into the chimneys, and laying its eggs in the bacon while it is drying. These eggs produce maggots, called jumpers, which, harbouring in

* Most probably *acarus autumnalis*. It buries itself at the roots of the hairs on the extremities, producing intolerable itching, attended by inflammation and considerable tumours, and sometimes even occasioning fevers.—W. J.

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the gammons and best part of the hogs, eat down to the bone, and make great waste. This fly I suspect to be a variety of the *musca putris* of Linnæus. It is to be seen in the summer in farm kitchens, on the bacon-racks, and about the mantel-pieces and on the ceilings.

The insect that infests turnips, and many crops in the garden, (destroying often whole fields, while in their seed-ling leaves,) is an animal that wants to be better known. The country people here call it the turnip fly and black dolphin; but I know it to be one of the *coleoptera*, the "*chrysomela oleracea, saltatoria, femoribus posticis crassissimis*," *—"The cabbage chrysomela, moving by a leap, with very thick hind-legs." In very hot summers they abound to an amazing degree, and, as you walk in a field, or in a garden, make a pattering like rain, by jumping on the leaves of the turnips or cabbages.

There is an oestrus, known in these parts to every plough-boy, which, because it is omitted by Linnæus, is also passed over by late writers; and that is the *curvicauda* of old Mouffet, mentioned by Derham in his *Physico-Theology*, p. 250: an insect worthy of remark, for depositing its eggs, as it flies, in so dexterous a manner on the single hairs of the legs and flanks of grass-horses. But then, Derham is mistaken when he advances that this oestrus is the parent of

* This is most probably the *haltica nemorum*, called by the farmers the *Fly* and *Black Jack*, so well described by Messrs. Kirby and Spence, in their admirable chapters on indirect injuries. It attacks and devours the first *cotyledon* leaves, as soon as they are unfolded; so that, on account of their ravages, the land is often obliged to be resown, and with no better success. By these entomologists it is stated, on the authority of an eminent agriculturist, that, from this cause alone, the loss sustained in the turnip crops in Devonshire, in 1786, was not less than 100,000*l*. Great damage is also sometimes done by the little *curculio contractus*, which, in the same manner, pierces a hole in the cuticle. When the plant is more advanced, and out of danger from these pigmy foes, the black larva of a saw-fly takes their place, and occasionally does no little mischief, whole districts being sometimes stripped by them, and, in 1783, many thousand acres were on this account ploughed up. The caterpillar of *papilio brassica* is sometimes found in great numbers, and the wire-worm also does occasionally great damage, both to turnips and other vegetable and flower-roots. Mr. Kirby mentions a field in which one-fourth was destroyed, and which the owner calculated at 100*l*. One year, the same person sowed a field three times with turnips, which were twice wholly, and the third time a great part, cut off by this insect.—W. J.

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THE PEACOCK. (*Pavo cristatus.*)

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that wonderful star-tailed maggot which he mentions afterwards; for more modern entomologists have discovered that singular production to be derived from the egg of the *musca chamæleon*. See Geoffroy, t. 17, f. 4.

A full history of noxious insects, hurtful in the field, garden, and house, suggesting all the known and likely means of destroying them, would be allowed by the public to be a most useful and important work. What knowledge there is of this sort lies scattered, and wants to be collected: great improvements would soon follow of course. A knowledge of the properties, economy, propagation, and, in short, of the life and conversation, of these animals, is a necessary step to lead us to some method of preventing their depredations.

As far as I am a judge, nothing would recommend entomology more than some neat plates that should well express the generic distinctions of insects according to Linnæus; for, I am well assured, that many people would study insects, could they set out with a more adequate notion of those distinctions that can be conveyed at first by words alone.

## LETTER XLIV.

### TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, 1770.

DEAR SIR,—Happening to make a visit to my neighbour's peacocks, I could not help observing, that the trains of those magnificent birds appear by no means to be their tails, those long feathers growing not from their *uropygium*, but all up their backs. A range of short, brown, stiff feathers, about six inches long, fixed in the *uropygium*, is the real tail, and serves as the *fulcrum* to prop the train, which is long and top-heavy, when set on end. When the train is up, nothing appears of the bird before but its head and neck; but this would not be the case, were these long feathers fixed only in the rump, as may be seen by the turkey cock, when in a strutting attitude. By a strong muscular vibra-

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tion, these birds can make the shafts of their long feathers clatter like the swords of a sword-dancer; they then trample very quick with their feet, and run backwards towards the females.

I should tell you that I have got an uncommon *calculus ægogropila*, taken out of the stomach of a fat ox. It is perfectly round, and about the size of a large Seville orange; such are, I think, usually flat.

## LETTER XLV.

### TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Aug.* 1, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—From what follows, it will appear that neither owls nor cuckoos keep to one note. A friend remarks that many (most) of his owls hoot in B flat; but that one went almost half a note below A. The pipe he tried their notes by was a common half-crown pitch-pipe, such as masters use for tuning of harpsichords; it was the common London pitch.

A neighbour of mine, who is said to have a nice ear, remarks that the owls about this village hoot in three different keys, in G flat or F sharp, in B flat, and A flat. He heard two hooting to each other, the one in A flat, and the other in B flat. Query: Do these different notes proceed from different species, or only from various individuals? The same person finds, upon trial, that the note of the cuckoo (of which we have but one species,) varies in different individuals; for, about Selborne wood, he found they were mostly in D; he heard two sing together, the one in D, and the other in D sharp, which made a disagreeable concert; he afterwards heard one in D sharp, and about Wolmer Forest, some in C. As to nightingales, he says, that their notes are so short, and their transitions so rapid, that he cannot well ascertain their key. Perhaps in a cage, and in a room, their notes may be more distinguishable. This person has tried to settle the notes of a swift, and of

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several other small birds, but cannot bring them to any criterion.

As I have often remarked that redwings are some of the first birds that suffer with us in severe weather, it is no wonder at all that they retreat from Scandinavian winters; and much more the *ordo* of *grallæ*, who all, to a bird, forsake the northern parts of Europe at the approach of winter. "*Grallæ tanquam conjuratæ unanimiter in fugam se conjiciunt; ne earum unicam quidem inter nos habitantem invenire possimus; ut enim æstate in australibus degere nequeunt ob defectum lumbricorum, terramque siccam; ita nec in frigidis ob eandem causam,*" "The grallæ, as if by agreement, take flight, nor can we find one residing here; for as, during summer, the deficiency of earth-worms and the hardness of the ground prevents them from abiding in hot countries; so neither can they dwell in cold climes, for the same reason," says Ekmarck, the Swede, in his ingenious little treatise called *Migrationes Avium*, which, by all means, you ought to read, while your thoughts run on the subject of migration.—See *Amœnitates Academicæ*, vol. iv. p. 565.

Birds may be so circumstanced as to be obliged to migrate in one country, and not in another; but the *grallæ* (which procure their food from marshes and boggy ground,) must, in winter, forsake the more northerly parts of Europe, or perish for want of food.

I am glad you are making inquiries from Linnæus concerning the woodcock; it is expected of him that he should be able to account for the motions and manner of life of the animals of his own *Fauna*.

Faunists, as you observe, are too apt to acquiesce in bare descriptions, and a few synonymes: the reason is plain, because all that may be done at home in a man's study; but the investigation of the life and conversation of animals is a concern of much more trouble and difficulty, and is not to be attained but by the active and inquisitive, and by those that reside much in the country.

Foreign systematists are, I observe, much too vague in their specific differences; which are almost universally constituted by one or two particular marks, the rest of the description running in general terms. But our countryman, the excellent Mr. Ray, is the only describer that conveys

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some precise idea in every term or word, maintaining his superiority over his followers and imitators, in spite of the advantage of fresh discoveries and modern information.

At this distance of years, it is not in my power to recollect at what periods woodcocks used to be sluggish or alert, when I was a sportsman; but, upon my mentioning this circumstance to a friend, he thinks he has observed them to be remarkably listless against snowy, foul weather; if this should be the case, then the inaptitude for flying arises only from an eagerness for food, as sheep are observed to be very intent on grazing against stormy wet evenings.

## LETTER XLVI.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

*September*, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—The summer through, I have seen but two of that large species of bat which I call *vespertilio altivolans*, from its manner of feeding high in the air. I procured one of them, and found it to be a male, and made no doubt, as they accompanied together, that the other was a female; but happening, in an evening or two, to procure the other likewise, I was somewhat disappointed when it appeared to be also of the same sex. This circumstance, and the great scarcity of this sort, at least in these parts, occasions some suspicions in my mind whether it is really a species, or whether it may not be the male part of the more known species, one of which may supply many females, as is known to be the case in sheep, and some other quadrupeds. But this doubt can only be cleared by a farther examination, and some attention to the sex, of more specimens. All that I know at present is, that my two were amply furnished with the parts of generation, much resembling those of a boar.

In the extent of their wings, they measured fourteen inches and a half, and four inches and a half from the nose to the tip of the tail: their heads were large, their nostrils

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bilobated, their shoulders broad and muscular, and their whole bodies fleshy and plump. Nothing could be more sleek and soft than their fur, which was of a bright chestnut colour; their maws were full of food, but so macerated, that the quality could not be distinguished; their livers, kidneys, and hearts, were large, and their bowels covered with fat. They weighed each, when entire, full one ounce and one drachm. Within the ear, there was somewhat of a peculiar structure that I did not understand perfectly; but refer it to the observation of the curious anatomist. These creatures send forth a very rancid and offensive smell.

## LETTER XLVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, 1771.

DEAR SIR,—On the twelfth of July, I had a fair opportunity of contemplating the motions of the *caprimulgus*, or fern-owl, as it was playing round a large oak that swarmed with *scarabæi solstitiales*, or fern-chafers.* The powers of its wing were wonderful, exceeding, if possible, the various evolutions and quick turns of the swallow genus. But the circumstance that pleased me most was, that I saw it distinctly more than once put out its short leg when on the wing, and, by a bend of the head, deliver somewhat into its mouth.† If it takes any part of its prey with its foot, as I

* Several species of *phalæna* live upon the oak; but one, the *phalæna viridana* of Donovan's *British Insects*, and which also appears to have been known to Mr. White, does considerable damage among the young oak copses in Scotland, while in the larva state. In the summer of 1828, and again in that of 1829, I met with this species in immense profusion about Inverary, and near Loch Katrine, where many hundred acres of oak copse appeared as in early spring, with the leaves much destroyed by this insect. This must undoubtedly check the growth, and, of course, when so extensively dispersed, be of some consequence to the proprietor. Though White describes it as *phalæna quercus*, it is undoubtedly this species which he means.—W. J.

† Titmice do the same. I have frequently observed them to catch bees with their feet.—ED.



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have now the greatest reason to suppose it does these chafers, I no longer wonder at the use of its middle toe, which is curiously furnished with a serrated claw.

Swallows and martins, the bulk of them, I mean, have forsaken us sooner this year than usual; for, on September the 22nd, they rendezvoused in a neighbour's walnut tree, where it seemed probable they had taken up their lodgings for the night. At the dawn of the day, which was foggy, they rose all together in infinite numbers, occasioning such a rushing from the strokes of their wings against the hazy air, as might be heard to a considerable distance; since that, no flock has appeared, only a few stragglers.

Some swifts staid late, till the 22nd of August; a rare instance! for they usually withdraw within the first week.*

On September the 24th, three or four ring-ousels appeared in my fields for the first time this season. How punctual are these visitors in their autumnal and spring migrations!

## LETTER XLVIII.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *February* 8, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—When I ride about in winter, and see such prodigious flocks of various kinds of birds,† I cannot help admiring at these congregations, and wishing that it was in my power to account for those appearances, almost peculiar

* See Letter XCVII. to the Hon. Daines Barrington.

† Mr. Bennett seems to think that the flocking of birds in winter is occasioned by hunger. Starlings, finches, linnets, and other birds, however, flock early in the autumn when food is plentiful. I have always thought, however, that birds flock by a benevolent arrangement of Providence, for self-preservation. Whenever they are gregarious, they are much more easily alarmed than when there are only a few together. Thus it is well known to sportsmen that when partridges and grouse assemble in large *packs*, it is very difficult to get within shot of them. Besides many gregarious birds, such as rooks, wood-pigeons, &c., plant sentinels on a tree who give an alarm when danger is apprehended. Large flocks of wild geese and ducks are generally very wild.—ED.

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to the season. The two great motives which regulate the proceedings of the brute creation are love and hunger; the former incites animals to perpetuate their kind, the latter induces them to preserve individuals. Whether either of these should seem to be the ruling passion in the matter of congregating, is to be considered. As to love, that is out of the question at a time of the year when that soft passion is not indulged; besides, during the amorous season, such a jealousy prevails between the male birds, that they can hardly bear to be together in the same hedge or field. Most of the singing and elation of spirits at that time seem to me to be the effect of rivalry and emulation; and it is to this spirit of jealousy that I chiefly attribute the equal dispersion of birds in the spring over the face of the country.

Now as to the business of food. As these animals are actuated by instinct to hunt for necessary food, they should not, one would suppose, crowd together in pursuit of sustenance, at a time when it is most likely to fail; yet such associations do take place in hard weather chiefly, and thicken as the severity increases. As some kind of self-interest and self-defence is, no doubt, the motive for the proceeding, may it not arise from the helplessness of their state in such rigorous seasons; as men crowd together, when under great calamities, though they know not why? Perhaps approximation may dispel some degree of cold: and a crowd may make each individual appear safer from the ravages of birds of prey, and other dangers.

If I admire when I see how much congenerous birds love to congregate, I am the more struck when I see incongruous ones in such strict amity. If we do not much wonder to see a flock of rooks usually attended by a train of daws, yet it is strange that the former should so frequently have a flight of starlings for their satellites.* Is it because rooks have a more discerning scent than their attendants, and can lead them to spots more productive of food? Anatomists say that rooks, by reason of two large nerves which run down

* Mr. White says it is strange that rooks and starlings accompany each other, but this is the case with other birds. The short-eared owl often accompanies flights of woodcocks in this country. In Greece, the cuckoo migrates with the turtle-flocks; thence they are called *trigonokracti*, or turtle-leader.—Rev. J. Mitford.



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between the eyes into the upper mandible, have a more delicate feeling in their beaks than other round-billed birds, and can grope for their meat when out of sight. Perhaps, then, their associates attend them on the motive of interest, as greyhounds wait on the motions of their finders, and as lions are said to do on the yelpings of jackals. Lapwings and starlings sometimes associate.

## LETTER XLIX

TO THE SAME.

*March* 9, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—As a gentleman and myself were walking, on the 4th of last November, round the sea-banks at Newhaven, near the mouth of the Lewes river, in pursuit of natural knowledge, we were surprised to see three house swallows gliding very swiftly by us. That morning was rather chilly, with the wind at north-west; but the tenor of the weather for some time before had been delicate, and the noons remarkably warm. From this incident, and from repeated accounts which I meet with, I am more and more induced to believe that many of the swallow kind do not depart from this island, but lay themselves up in holes and caverns, and do, insect-like and bat-like, come forth at mild times, and then retire again to their *latebræ*, or lurking-places. Nor make I the least doubt but that, if I lived at Newhaven, Seaford, Brighthelmstone,* or any of those towns near the chalk cliffs of the Sussex coast, by proper observations, I should see swallows stirring at periods of the winter, when the noons were soft and inviting, and the sun warm and invigorating. And I am the more of this opinion, from what I have remarked during some of our late springs, and though some swallows did make their appearance about the usual

* Much as I have resided in Brighton, and many as my inquiries have been, I have never heard of or seen swallows at any unusual periods in that neighbourhood.—ED.

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time, viz., the 13th or 14th of April, yet, meeting with an harsh reception, and blustering cold north-east winds, they immediately withdrew, absconding for several days till the weather gave them better encouragement.

## LETTER L.

TO THE SAME.

*April* 12, 1772.

DEAR SIR,—While I was in Sussex last autumn, my residence was at the village near Lewes, from whence I had formerly the pleasure of writing to you. On the 1st of November, I remarked that the old tortoise, formerly mentioned, began first to dig the ground, in order to the forming of its hybernaculum, which it had fixed on just beside a great turf of hepaticas. It scrapes out the ground with its fore-feet, and throws it up over its back with its hind; but the motion of its legs is ridiculously slow,* little exceeding the hour-hand of a clock, and suitable to the composure of an animal said to be a whole month in performing one feat of copulation. Nothing can be more assiduous than this creature, night and day, in scooping the earth, and forcing its great body into the cavity; but, as the noons of that season proved unusually warm and sunny, it was continually interrupted, and called forth by the heat, in the middle of the day; and though I continued there till the 13th of November, yet the work remained unfinished. Harsher weather and frosty mornings would have quickened its operations. No part of its behaviour ever struck me more than the extreme timidity it always expresses with regard to rain; for though it has a shell that would secure it against the wheel of a loaded cart, yet does it discover as much solicitude about

* The motion of the tortoise's legs being, as Mr. White remarks, "ridiculously slow," is taken notice of in Homer's Hymn to Hermes—

"Feeding far from man, the flowery herb,
Slow moving with his feet."—REV. J. MITFORD.

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rain as a lady dressed in all her best attire, shuffling away on the first sprinklings, and running its head up in a corner. If attended to, it becomes an excellent weather-glass; for as sure as it walks elate, and, as it were, on tiptoe, feeding with great earnestness in a morning, so sure will it rain before night. It is totally a diurnal animal, and never pretends to stir after it becomes dark. The tortoise, like other reptiles, has an arbitrary stomach, as well as lungs; and can refrain from eating as well as breathing for a great part of the year. When first awakened, it eats nothing; nor again in the autumn, before it retires: through the height of the summer it feeds voraciously, devouring all the food that comes in its way. I was much taken with its sagacity in discerning those that do it kind offices; for, as soon as the good old lady comes in sight who has waited on it for more than thirty years, it hobbles towards its benefactress with awkward alacrity, but remains inattentive to strangers. Thus not only "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,"* but the most abject reptile and torpid of beings distinguishes the hand that feeds it, and is touched with the feelings of gratitude.

P.S.—In about three days after I left Sussex, the tortoise retired into the ground under the hepatica.†

* Isaiah i. 3.

† Tortoises are often kept in gardens as a curiosity, where they continue perfectly healthy, and arrive at an almost incredible age. When kept in the stove or green-house, their torpidity does not take place, although at the annual period for its occurrence, they are generally noticed for a short time to be more restless and irritable. The following are some remarkable instances of longevity recorded by Mr. Murray, in his *Experimental Researches*:—In the library of Lambeth Palace is the shell of a land tortoise, brought there about the year 1623; it lived to 1730, a period of 107 years. Another was placed in the garden of the episcopal palace of Fulham, by Bishop Laud, in 1625, and died in 1753—128 years: the age at which these were placed in the gardens was, of course, unknown. Another is mentioned 220 years, and one in Exeter 'Change, 800: the latter, however does not seem well authenticated, though there can be no doubt of the period of their existence being very extensive. Mr. Murray has added some very interesting information regarding the habits of a tortoise kept at Peterborough:—

"From a document belonging to the archives of the cathedral, called the *Bishop's Barn*, it is well ascertained that the tortoise at Peterborough must have been about 220 years old. Bishop Marsh's predecessor in the see of Peterborough had remembered it above sixty years, and could recognise no visible change. He was the seventh bishop who had worn the mitre during

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## LETTER LI.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *March* 15, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—By my journal for last autumn, it appears that the house-martins bred very late, and staid very late in these parts; for on the 1st of October I saw young martins in

its sojourn there. If I mistake not, its sustenance and abode were provided for in this document. Its shell was perforated, in order to attach it to a tree, &c., to limit its ravages among the strawberry borders.

"The animal had its antipathies and predilections. It would eat endive, green peas, and even the leek; while it positively rejected asparagus, parsley, and spinage. In the early part of the season, its favourite pabulum was the flowers of the dandelion (*leontodon taraxacum*), of which it would devour *twenty* at a meal; and lettuce (*lactuca sativa*); of the latter a good sized one at a time; but, if placed between lettuce and the flowers of the dandelion, it would forsake the former for the latter. It was also partial to the pulp of an orange, which it sucked greedily.

"About the latter end of June (discerning the times and the seasons), it looked out for fruit, when its former choice was forsaken. It ate currants, raspberries, pears, apples, peaches, nectarines, &c., the riper the better; but would not taste cherries. Of fruits, however, the strawberry and gooseberry were the most esteemed; it made great havoc among the strawberry borders, and would take a pint of gooseberries at intervals. The gardener told me it knew him well, the hand that generally fed it, and would watch him attentively at the gooseberry bush, where it was sure to take its station while he plucked the fruit.

"I could not get it to take the root of the dandelion, nor indeed any root I offered it, as that of the carrot, turnip, &c. All animal food was discarded, nor would it take any liquid, at least, neither milk nor water; and when a leaf was moist, it would shake it, to expel the adhering wet.

"This animal moved with apparent ease, though pressed by a weight of 18 stones; itself weighed 13½ lbs. In cloudy weather, it would scoop out a cavity, generally in a southern exposure, where it reposed, torpid and inactive, until the genial influence of the sun roused it from its slumber. When in this state, the eyes were closed and the head and neck a little contracted, though not drawn within the shell. Its sense of smelling was so acute, that it was roused from its lethargy if any person approached even at a distance of twelve feet.

"About the beginning of October, or the latter end of September, it began to immure itself, and had, for that purpose, for many years selected an angle

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their nests, nearly fledged; and again, on the 21st of October, we had at the next house a nest full of young martins, just ready to fly, and the old ones were hawking for insects with great alertness. The next morning the brood forsook their nest, and were flying round the village. From this day I never saw one of the swallow kind till November the 3rd; when twenty, or perhaps thirty, house-martins were playing all day long by the side of the Hanging-wood, and over my fields. Did these small weak birds, some of which were nestlings twelve days ago, shift their quarters at this late season of the year to the other side of the northern tropic? Or rather, is it not more probable that the next church, ruin, chalk-cliff, steep covert, or perhaps sand-bank, lake, or pool, (as a more northern naturalist would say,) may become their hybernaculum, and afford them a ready and obvious retreat?

We now begin to expect our vernal migration of ring-ousels every week. Persons worthy of credit assure me that ring-ousels were seen at Christmas, 1770, in the forest of Bere, on the southern verge of this county. Hence we may conclude that their migrations are only internal, and not extended to the continent southward, if they do at first come at all from the northern parts of this island only, and not from the north of Europe. Come from whence they will, it is plain, from the fearless disregard that they show for men or guns, that they have been little accustomed to places of much resort. Navigators mention that in the Isle of Ascension, and other desolate districts, birds are so little acquainted with the human form, that they settle on men's shoulders, and have no more dread of a sailor than they would have of a goat that was grazing. A young man at Lewes, in Sussex, assured me that about seven years ago ring-ousels abounded

of the garden: it entered in an inclined plane, excavating the earth in the manner of the mole; the depth to which it penetrated varied with the character of the approaching season, being from one to two feet, according as the winter was mild or severe. It may be added, that, for nearly a month prior to this entry into its dormitory, it refused all sustenance whatever. The animal emerged about the end of April, and remained for at least a fortnight before it ventured on taking any species of food. Its skin was not perceptibly cold: its respiration, entirely effected through the nostrils, was languid. I visited the animal, for the last time, on the 9th of June, 1813, during a thunder storm: it then lay under the shelter of a cauliflower, and apparently torpid."—MURRAY's *Experimental Researches*.—W. J.

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so about that town in the autumn, that he killed sixteen himself in one afternoon: he added farther, that some had appeared since in every autumn; but he could not find that any had been observed before the season in which he shot so many. I myself have found these birds in little parties in the autumn, cantoned all along the Sussex downs, wherever there were shrubs and bushes, from Chichester to Lewes; particularly in the autumn of 1770.

## LETTER LII.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *March* 26, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—The more I reflect on the στοργή, or natural affection of animals, the more I am astonished at its effects. Nor is the violence of its affection more wonderful than the shortness of its duration.* Thus every hen is in her turn the virago of the yard, in proportion to the helplessness of her brood; and will fly in the face of a dog or a sow in defence of those chickens, which in a few weeks she will drive before her with relentless cruelty.

This affection sublimes the passions, quickens the invention, and sharpens the sagacity of the brute creation. Thus an hen, just become a mother, is no longer that placid bird she used to be; but, with feathers standing on end, wings hovering, and clucking note, she runs about like one possessed. Dams will throw themselves in the way of the greatest danger in order to avert it from their progeny. Thus a partridge will tumble along before a sportsman, in order to draw away the dogs from her helpless covey. In the time of nidification, the most feeble birds will assault the

* There are two well authenticated instances on record of bustards attacking men on horseback *at night*, when their haunts have been invaded, and probably in defence of their young. One instance is mentioned on his own knowledge by Sir Richard Colt Hoare in his History of Wilts, and the other, I think, by Mr. Gilpin.—ED.

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most rapacious. All the *hirundines* of a village are up in arms at the sight of an hawk, whom they will persecute till he leaves that district. A very exact observer has often remarked, that a pair of ravens, nesting in the rock of Gibraltar, would suffer no vulture or eagle to rest near their station, but would drive them from the hill with an amazing fury: even the blue thrush, at the season of breeding, would dart out from the clefts of the rocks to chase away the kestrel or the sparrow-hawk.* If you stand near the nest of a bird that has young, she will not be induced to betray them by an inadvertent fondness, but will wait about at a distance, with meat in her mouth, for an hour together.

Should I farther corroborate what I have advanced above by some anecdotes which I probably may have mentioned before in conversation, yet you will, I trust, pardon the repetition for the sake of the illustration.

The fly-catcher of the *Zoology* (the *stoparola* of Ray) builds every year in the vines that grow on the walls of my house.† A pair of these little birds had one year inadvertently placed their nest on a naked bough, perhaps in a shady time, not being aware of the inconvenience that followed; but an hot sunny season coming on before the brood was half fledged, the reflection of the wall became insupportable, and must inevitably have destroyed the tender young, had not affection suggested an expedient, and prompted the parent birds to hover over the nest all the hotter hours, while, with wings expanded, and mouths gaping for breath, they screened off the heat from their suffering offspring.‡

* Many birds, when their nest has been discovered with their young in it, will utter plaintive and distressed cries. I have known blackbirds fly at the face of a person who has taken a young one out of their nest, and have seen a cat assailed by them, and obliged to retreat from the neighbourhood of their nest.—Ed.

† *Muscicapa grisola*, Linn.—W. J.

‡ This is a charming instance of parental affection, but perhaps not so much so as the following. During a wet day, a house swallow's nest became saturated, and fell to the ground. It contained five unfledged young ones. A lady, who saw the accident, collected the brood, placed the lining of the nest in a small basket, put the young ones in it, and deposited the basket inside the window of her dressing-room. She soon had the pleasure of seeing the old birds come and feed their offspring. One of them was so weak, that it did not receive the same quantity of food as the others, and, consequently, when they

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A farther instance I once saw of notable sagacity in a willow-wren, which had built in a bank in my fields. This bird, a friend and myself had observed as she sat in her nest, but were particularly careful not to disturb her, though we saw she eyed us with some degree of jealousy. Some days after, as we passed that way, we were desirous of remarking how this brood went on; but no nest could be found, till I happened to take up a large bundle of long green moss, as it were carelessly thrown over the nest, in order to dodge the eye of any impertinent intruder.*

A still more remarkable mixture of sagacity and instinct occurred to me one day, as my people were pulling off the lining of a hot-bed, in order to add some fresh dung. From out of the side of this bed leaped an animal with great agility, that made a most grotesque figure; nor was it without great difficulty that it could be taken, when it proved to be a large

were able to leave the nest, this helpless one remained, only half fledged, and suffering from cold, when it had the whole nest to itself. There was at the time a bitter north-east wind, which penetrated through the openings in the basket-work, and which, of course, added to the misery of the poor bird. All at once the old ones were seen to come with clay in their mouths, and in a short time they built up a wall against the basket, which effectually screened the young one from the cold wind. It was reared, and took its flight.

I cannot resist giving another strong instance of parental affection in the feathered tribe:—

A gentleman in my neighbourhood had directed one of his waggons to be packed with sundry hampers and boxes, intending to send it to Worthing, where he was going. For some time his journey was delayed, and he therefore directed that the waggon should be placed in a shed in his yard, packed as it was, till it should be convenient for him to send it off. While it was in the shed, a pair of robins built their nest among some straw in the waggon, and had hatched their young just before it was sent away. One of the old birds, (the female, most probably, for what will not a female do?) instead of being frightened away by the motion of the waggon, only left its nest from time to time, for the purpose of flying to the nearest hedge for food for its young; and thus, alternately affording food and warmth to them, it arrived at Worthing. The affection of this bird having attracted the notice of the waggoner, he took care, in unloading, not to disturb the robin's nest; and my readers will, I am sure, be glad to hear that the robin and its young ones returned in safety to Walton Heath, being the place from whence they had set out. The distance the waggon went, in going and returning, could not have been less than one hundred miles.—Ed. (*Gleanings*).

* I have known a fly-catcher, whose nest I had discovered in a pear tree against my garden wall, conceal it by drawing some of the leaves of the tree over it.—Ed.

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white-bellied field-mouse, with three or four young clinging to her teats by their mouths and feet. It was amazing that the desultory and rapid motions of this dam should not oblige her litter to quit their hold, especially when it appeared that they were so young as to be both naked and blind!*

To these instances of tender attachment, many more of which might be daily discovered by those that are studious of nature, may be opposed that rage of affection, that monstrous perversion of the στοργή, which induces some females of the brute creation to devour their young, because their owners have handled them too freely, or removed them from place to place!† Swine, and sometimes the more gentle race of dogs and cats, are guilty of this horrid and preposterous murder. When I hear now and then of an abandoned mother that destroys her offspring, I am not so much amazed; since reason perverted, and the bad passions let loose, are capable of any enormity; but why the parental feelings of brutes, that usually flow in one most uniform tenor, should sometimes be so extravagantly diverted, I leave to abler philosophers than myself to determine.

* I have seen the same thing with our common bat. I once slept, during a very stormy night, in a house of considerable age, and not in the best state of repair. One of the windows in my bed-room had been built up, but so loosely, that bats and swifts had free access between the wall and a large board that was placed on the inside, to add to the warmth of the room. On the night above mentioned, this board was blown down inwards, and the room immediately filled with bats and swifts. Many of the former had one or two young adhering to their breasts, while flying round the room, and, even when knocked down, were not freed from their burdens. Above sixty were caught in this small space, and at least as many must have escaped. They appear to be on terms of perfect amity with the swifts.—W. J.

† The pleasure which animals derive in having their milk drawn off by their young, causes much of the tender attachment they have for them. Thus, a fox which had lost its litter, stole a young puppy to suckle it; and many similar instances might be brought forward. When animals, as is sometimes but not often the case, have no milk after parturition, they frequently devour their young.—Ed.

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## LETTER LIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *July* 8, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—Some young men went down lately to a pond on the verge of Wolmer Forest to hunt flappers, or young wild ducks, many of which they caught, and, among the rest, some very minute yet well-fledged wild fowls alive, which, upon examination, I found to be teals. I did not know till then that teals ever bred in the south of England, and was much pleased with the discovery: this I look upon as a great stroke in natural history.

We have had, ever since I can remember, a pair of white owls that constantly breed under the eaves of this church. As I have paid good attention to the manner of life of these birds during their season of breeding, which lasts the summer through, the following remarks may not perhaps be unacceptable. About an hour before sunset (for then the mice begin to run) they sally forth in quest of prey, and hunt all round the hedges of meadows and small inclosures for them, which seem to be their only food. In this irregular country we can stand on an eminence, and see them beat the fields over like a setting-dog, and often drop down in the grass or corn. I have minuted these birds with my watch for an hour together, and have found that they return to their nest, the one or the other of them, about once in five minutes;* reflecting, at the same time, on the adroitness that every animal is possessed of, as far as regards the well-being of itself and offspring. But a piece of address which they show when they return loaded, should not, I think be passed over

* Colonel Montagu has observed (see *Ornithological Dict.*, p. 35), that the wren returns once in *two* minutes, or, upon an average, thirty-six times in an hour; and this continued full sixteen hours in a day, which, if equally divided between eight young ones, each would receive seventy-two feeds in the day. To this may be added, that the swallow never fails to return to its nest at the expiration of every second or third minute.—REV. J. MITFORD.

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in silence. As they take their prey with their claws, so they carry it in their claws to their nest; but, as the feet are necessary in their ascent under the tiles, they constantly perch first on the roof of the chancel, and shift the mouse from their claws to their bill, that the feet may be at liberty to take hold of the plate on the wall, as they are rising under the eaves.

White owls seem not (but in this I am not positive) to hoot at all;* all that clamorous hooting appears to me to come from the wood kinds. The white owl does indeed snore and hiss in a tremendous manner; and these menaces well answer the intention of intimidating; for I have known a whole village up in arms on such an occasion, imagining the churchyard to be full of goblins and spectres. White owls also often scream horribly as they fly along: from this screaming, probably, arose the common people's imaginary species of screech-owl, which they superstitiously think attends the windows of dying persons. The plumage of the remiges of the wings of every species of owl that I have yet examined, is remarkably soft and pliant. Perhaps it may be necessary that the wings of these birds should not make much resistance or rushing, that they may be able to steal through the air unheard upon a nimble and watchful quarry.

While I am talking of owls, it may not be improper to mention what I was told by a gentleman of the county of Wilts. As they were grubbing a vast hollow pollard ash, that had been the mansion of owls for centuries, he discovered at the bottom a mass of matter that at first he could not account for. After some examination, he found that it was a congeries of the bones of mice, (and perhaps of birds and bats,) that had been heaping together for ages, being cast up in pellets out of the crops of many generations of inhabitants. For owls cast up the bones, fur, and feathers of what they devour, after the manner of hawks. He believes, he told me, that there were bushels of this kind of substance.

When brown owls hoot, their throats swell as big as an hen's egg. I have known an owl of this species live a full year without any water. Perhaps the case may be the same

* White owls *do* hoot—I have shot them in the act. They also hiss and scream; but at night, when not alarmed, hooting is the general cry.—W. J.

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The Snowy Owl.

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with all birds of prey.* When owls fly, they stretch out their legs behind them, as a balance to their large heavy heads; for, as most nocturnal birds have large eyes and ears, they must have large heads to contain them. Large eyes, I presume, are necessary to collect every ray of light, and large concave ears to command the smallest degree of sound or noise.

The *hirundines* are a most inoffensive, harmless, entertaining, social, and useful tribe of birds; they touch no fruit in our gardens; delight, all except one species, in attaching themselves to our houses; amuse us with their migrations, songs, and marvellous agility: and clear our outlets from the annoyances of gnats and other troublesome insects. Some districts in the South Seas, near Guiaquil,† are desolated, it seems, by the infinite swarms of venomous mosquitoes, which fill the air, and render those coasts insupportable. It would be worth inquiring, whether any species of *hirundines* is found in these regions. Whoever contemplates the myriads of insects that sport in the sunbeams of a summer evening in this country, will soon be convinced to what a degree our atmosphere would be choked with them were it not for the friendly interposition of the swallow tribe.‡

* All birds of prey are capable of sustaining the want of food and water for long periods, particularly the latter, but of which they also seem remarkably fond, drinking frequently in a state of nature, and, during summer, washing almost daily.—W. J.

† See Ulloa's *Travels*.

‡ This passage alone ought to be sufficient to prevent persons from wantonly destroying this useful, engaging, and elegant bird. If they were more encouraged than they are about hop-grounds,—suitable erections being made, against which they would build,—the editor is convinced that much of the blight so common on the bind of hops would be prevented. Mr. Knapp, in his *Journal of a Naturalist*, remarked, that the immense quantity of flies destroyed in a short space of time, by one individual bird, is scarcely to be credited by those who have not actual experience of the fact. He adds, that he was once present when a swift was shot. It was in the breeding season, when the young were hatched, at which time the parent birds are in the habit of making little excursions into the country, for the purpose of collecting flies, which they bring to their infant progeny. He says, that on picking up the bird, he observed a number of flies, some mutilated, others scarcely injured, crawling out of the bird's mouth. The throat and pouch seemed absolutely stuffed with them, and an incredible number was at length disgorged. He thinks that he is within compass in stating, that there was a mass of flies, just caught by this single swift, larger than, when pressed close, would conveniently be contained in the bowl of an ordinary table-spoon.—Ed.

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Many species of birds have their peculiar lice: but the *hirundines* alone seem to be annoyed with *dipterous* insects which infest every species, and are so large, in proportion to themselves, that they must be extremely irksome and injurious to them. These are the *hippoboscæ hirundinis*, with narrow subulated wings, abounding in every nest; and are hatched by the warmth of the bird's own body during incubation, and crawl about under its feathers.

A species of them is familiar to horsemen in the south of England, under the name of forest-fly, and, to some, of side-fly, from its running sideways, like a crab. It creeps under the tails and about the groins of horses, which, at their first coming out of the north, are rendered half frantic by the tickling sensation; while our own breed little regards them.

The curious Reaumur discovered the large eggs, or rather *pupæ*, of these flies, as big as the flies themselves, which he hatched in his own bosom. Any person that will take the trouble to examine the old nests of either species of swallows, may find in them the black shining cases, or skins, of the *pupæ* of these insects; but, for other particulars, too long for this place, we refer the reader to *L'Histoire d'Insectes* of that admirable entomologist.—Tom. iv. pl. 11.

## LETTER LIV.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 9, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—As you desire me to send you such observations as may occur, I take the liberty of making the following remarks, that you may, according as you think me right or wrong, admit or reject what I here advance, in your intended new edition of the *British Zoology*.

The osprey* was shot about a year ago at Frinsham Pond, a great lake, at about six miles from hence, while it was

* *British Zoology*, vol. i. p. 128. This beautiful bird, the *Falco haliætus* of Pennant, has been frequently seen and destroyed in this country.—ED.

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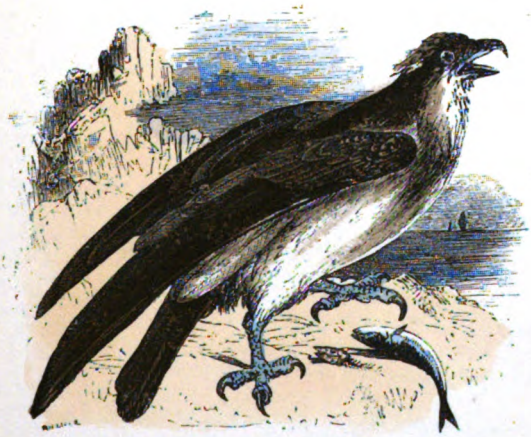

THE OSPREY, OR FISHING HAWK. (*Falco, or Pandion Haliætus.*)

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sitting on the handle of a plough and devouring a fish; it used to precipitate itself into the water, and so take its prey by surprise.

A great ash-coloured * butcher-bird was shot last winter in Tisted Park, and a red-backed butcher-bird at Selborne. They are scarce birds in this country.

Crows† go in pairs the whole year round.

Cornish choughs‡ abound, and breed on Beechy Head, and on all the cliffs of the Sussex coast.§

The common wild pigeon,‖ or stock-dove, is a bird of passage in the south of England, seldom appearing till towards the end of November,—is usually the latest winter bird of passage. Before our beechen woods were so much destroyed, we had myriads of them, reaching in strings for a mile together, as they went out in a morning to feed. They leave us early in spring. Where do they breed?

The people of Hampshire and Sussex call the missel-bird¶ the storm-cock,** because it sings early in the spring, in blowing, showery weather. Its song often commences with the year: with us it builds much in orchards.

A gentleman assures me he has taken the nests of ring-ousels†† on Dartmoor; they build in banks on the sides of streams.

Titlarks ‡‡ not only sing sweetly as they sit on trees, but also as they play and toy about on the wing; and particularly while they are descending, and sometimes as they stand on the ground.§§

Adamson's‖‖ testimony seems to me to be a very poor evidence that European swallows migrate¶¶ during our winter

* *British Zoology*, p. 161. † *Ibid.* p. 167. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 198.

§ Cornish choughs abound in the Isle of Man, and breed there. They are also found on the Galloway and Kirkcudbright coasts.—W. J.

‖ *British Zoology*, vol. i. p. 216. ¶ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 224.

** In Staffordshire it is called the *thrice* cock; but for what reason I know not.—Ed.

†† *British Zoology*, p. 229. ‡‡ *Ibid.* vol. ii. p. 237.

§§ Mr. White must have mistaken this for *anthus arboreus*, or tree-lark. The titlark (*anthus pratensis*) seldom sits on trees.—W. J.

‖‖ *British Zoology*, vol. ii. p. 242.

¶¶ I have reason to believe that there is no portion of the world in which swallows congregate at certain seasons, from which they do not periodically migrate.—Ed.



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to Senegal; he does not talk at all like an ornithologist, and probably saw only the swallows of that country, which I know build within Governor O'Hara's hall against the roof. Had he known European swallows, would he not have mentioned the species?

The house-swallow washes by dropping into the water as it flies;* this species appears commonly about a week before the house-martin, and about ten or twelve days before the swift.

In 1772, there were young house-martins† in their nest till October the 23rd.

The swift‡ appears about ten or twelve days later than the house-swallow; viz., about the 24th or 26th of April.

Whin-chats§ and stone-chatters‖ stay with us the whole year.

Some wheatears¶ continue with us the winter through.**

Wagtails, all sorts, remain with us all the winter.††

Bullfinches,‡‡ when fed on hempseed, often become wholly black.

We have vast flocks of female chaffinches§§ all the winter, with hardly any males among them.

When you say that, in breeding time the cock snipes‖‖‖ make a bleating noise, and a drumming (perhaps I should have rather said a humming), I suspect we mean the same

* "The twittering swallow skims the dimpled lake."
"Aut arguta lacus circumvolitavit hirundo."—VIRGIL.

Few things please me more than watching the evolutions of swallows, as they fly over, and occasionally dip on the smooth surface of a pool of water.—ED.

† *British Zoology*, vol ii. p. 224. ‡ *Ibid.* p. 245.

§ Whin-chat (*saxicola rubetra*, Bechst.) certainly does migrate. Stone-chat (*saxicola rubicola*, Bechst.) is a resident, but we receive an accession of numbers yearly.—W. J.

‖ *British Zoology*, vol. ii. pp. 270, 271. ¶ *Ibid.* p. 269.

** The great body of wheatears migrate regularly; and it is just possible that a few pairs may remain during the winter, in the southern countries; but I strongly suspect Mr. White, though quoting, must be wrong.—W. J.

†† Mr. White seems only to have known two species of wagtail, the pied and grey. The yellow wagtail is a regular migrater, but is very local in its distribution. Both the others partially migrate in Scotland. Flocks of the first appear in spring, and a few pairs only remain during the winter.—W. J.

‡‡ *British Zoology*, vol. ii. p. 300.

§§ *Ibid.* p. 306. ‖‖‖ *Ibid.* p. 358.

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thing. However, while they are playing about on the wing, they certainly make a loud piping with their mouths; but whether that bleating or humming is ventriloquous, or proceeds from the motion of their wings, I cannot say; but this I know, that, when this noise happens, the bird is always descending, and his wings are violently agitated.

Soon after the lapwings * have done breeding, they congregate, and leaving the moors and marshes, betake themselves to downs and sheep walks.

Two years ago † last spring, the little auk was found alive and unhurt, but fluttering and unable to rise, in a lane a few miles from Alresford, where there is a great lake; it was kept a while, but died.

I saw young teals‡ taken alive in the ponds of Wolmer Forest in the beginning of July last, along with flappers, or young wild ducks.

Speaking of the swift,§ that page says, "*its drink the dew;*" whereas it should be, "it drinks on the wing;" for all the swallow kind sip their water as they sweep over the face of pools or rivers: like Virgil's bees, they drink flying—"*flumina summa libant,*" "they sip the surface of the stream." In this method of drinking, perhaps this genus may be peculiar.

Of the sedge-bird,‖ be pleased to say, it sings most part of the night; its notes are hurrying, but not unpleasing, and imitative of several birds, as the sparrow, swallow, skylark. When it happens to be silent in the night, by throwing a stone or clod into the bushes where it sits, you immediately set it a-singing, or, in other words, though it slumbers sometimes, yet, as soon as it is awakened, it reassumes its song.¶

* *British Zoology*, vol ii. p. 360. † *Ibid.* p. 409.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 475. They breed amongst the ling of Woolmer Forest, and on the extensive heaths near Lephook.—Ed.

§ *Ibid.* p. 15. ‖ *Ibid.* p. 16.

¶ I have always found this to be the case on passing the willow aits on the river Thames, in a boat in the evening. The least noise at that time will set these birds singing.—Ed.



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## LETTER LV.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 20, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—In obedience to your injunctions, I sit down to give you some account of the house-martin, or martlet; and, if my monography of this little domestic and familiar bird should happen to meet with your approbation, I may probably soon extend my inquiries to the rest of the British *hirundines*,—the swallow, the swift, and the bank-martin.

A few house-martins begin to appear about the 16th of April; usually some few days later than the swallow. For some time after they appear, the *hirundines* in general pay no attention to the business of nidification, but play and sport about, either to recruit from the fatigue of their journey, if they do migrate at all, or else that their blood may recover its true tone and texture after it has been so long benumbed by the severities of winter. About the middle of May, if the weather be fine, the martin begins to think in earnest of providing a mansion for its family.* The crust or

* The following fact strongly illustrates the sense and reflection of a pair of swallows, in the construction of their nests:—

The late Earl of Albemarle informed me that a pair of swallows built their nest under the arch of a lime-kiln belonging to him, at its extreme point, and from which three chimneys or flues branched off. At the time the nest was constructing, the heat of the kiln was so great, that only keeping the hand for a short time within the arch produced a painful sensation. In this spot, however, the nest was nearly completed, when the heat caused it to crumble, and fall to the ground. A second nest was built in the same spot, and afterwards a third, both of which shared the same fate. A fourth nest was then built, which stood perfectly well, although the heat of the kiln had by no means abated; and in this nest the swallows hatched and brought up their young. The following year, another nest was begun and finished in the same spot, and with the same heat in the kiln, which stood the influence of the fire, and in which the swallows hatched and reared their brood; and this was done in the same manner on the third year. The fourth year the swallows did not appear, which the lime-burner considered as very ominous of the future success of the kiln. The birds had probably been killed. The lime-kiln was on

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shell of this nest seems to be formed of such dirt or loam as comes most readily to hand, and is tempered and wrought together with little bits of broken straws, to render it tough and tenacious. As this bird often builds against a perpendicular wall, without any projecting ledge under it, it requires its utmost efforts to get the first foundation firmly fixed, so that it may safely carry the superstructure. On this occasion the bird not only clings with its claws, but partly supports itself by strongly inclining its tail against the wall, making that a fulcrum; and, thus steadied, it works and plasters the materials into the face of the brick or stone. But, then, that this work may not, while it is soft and green, pull itself down by its own weight, the provident architect has prudence and forbearance enough not to advance her work too fast; but, by building only in the morning, and by dedicating the rest of the day to food and amusement, gives it sufficient time to dry and harden. About half an inch seems to be sufficient layer for a day. Thus, careful workmen, when they build mud-walls (informed at first, perhaps, by these little birds), raise but a moderate layer at a time, and then desist, lest the work should become top-heavy, and so be

Lord Albemarle's estate, and he was in the constant habit of visiting it, and took much interest in the proceedings of the swallows. In reading the above account, which has been given in Lord Albemarle's words, it is almost impossible not to be struck with the following facts :—

1st, That the swallows must have discovered and worked up a sort of clay or earth which would stand heat.

2nd, It is, I think, clear, that instinct alone would not have taught them to do this. Let me then ask those who deny any faculties to the animal creation beyond instinct, what faculty induced the birds to alter their original mode of procedure?

3rd, On returning to the kiln the second and third years, the swallows must have kept in their recollection, not only the fact that the earth instinct had taught them to use in building their nests would not bear the heat of the kiln, but they must also have remembered the sort of earth or clay which was requisite, and also the necessity of making use of it in that peculiar place.

Mr. White has elsewhere remarked, that philosophers have defined *instinct* to be that secret influence by which every species is impelled naturally to pursue, *at all times*, the same way or tract, without any teaching or example; whereas *reason*, without instruction, would often vary, and do that by many methods which instinct effects by one alone. If this definition between instinct and reason is correct, the above mentioned fact would seem to entitle these swallows to be considered as possessed of no ordinary degree of sense and intelligence, if not of something approaching to reason.—Ed. (*Gleanings.*)

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ruined by its own weight. By this method, in about ten or twelve days, is formed an hemispheric nest, with a small aperture towards the top,—strong, compact, and warm, and perfectly fitted for all the purposes for which it was intended. But, then, nothing is more common than for the house-sparrow, as soon as the shell is finished, to seize on it as its own, to eject the owner, and to line it after its own manner.*

After so much labour is bestowed in erecting a mansion, as nature seldom works in vain, martins will breed on, for several years together, in the same nest, where it happens to be well sheltered and secure from the injuries of weather. The shell, or crust, of the nest is a sort of rustic-work, full of knobs and protuberances on the outside; nor is the inside of those that I have examined smoothed with any exactness at all; but is rendered soft and warm, and fit for incubation, by a lining of small straws, grasses, and feathers; and sometimes by a bed of moss interwoven with wool. In this nest, they tread, or engender, frequently during the time of building; and the hen lays from three to five white eggs.†

At first, when the young are hatched, and are in a naked and helpless condition, the parent birds, with tender assiduity, carry out what comes away from their young. Were it not for this affectionate cleanliness, the nestlings would soon be burnt up and destroyed, in so deep and hollow a nest, by their own caustic excrement. In the quadruped creation,

* Several interesting facts have been communicated to me of the revengeful disposition of martins, when their nests have been invaded by sparrows. In one instance at Hampton Court, a gentleman informed me the morning it took place that a couple of sparrows had hatched their young in a martin's nest. Two or three days afterwards, a number of martins came, pecked the nest to pieces, and I saw the unfledged young dead on the ground beneath the window. In another instance, the foreman of the carpenters at the palace, Hampton Court, informed me, that while working at his bench close to the window, a pair of swallows built their nest in a corner of it and where he frequently watched it. When completed some sparrows took possession of it, and deposited their eggs. While the hen was sitting on them, several martins came and closed up the hole. After a few weeks he examined the nest and found the bird dead on her eggs. I could mention other similar instances.—Ed.

† This is certainly a mistake. Mr. White could not have seen the circumstance even had it taken place, from the construction of the nest. In fact, both the martin and swift copulate on the wing as I have frequently seen them do.—Ed.

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the same neat precaution is made use of; particularly among dogs and cats, where the dams lick away what proceeds from their young. But, in birds, there seems to be a particular provision, that the dung of nestlings is enveloped in a tough kind of jelly, and, therefore, is the easier conveyed off, without soiling or daubing.* Yet, as Nature is cleanly in all her ways, the young perform this office for themselves in a little time, by thrusting their tails out at the aperture of their nest. As the young of small birds presently arrive at their ἡλικία, or full growth, they soon become impatient of confinement, and sit all day with their heads out at the orifice, where the dams, by clinging to the nest, supply them with food from morning to night. For a time, the young are fed on the wing by their parents: but the feat is done by so quick and almost imperceptible a sleight, that a person must have attended very exactly to their motions, before he would be able to perceive it. As soon as the young are able to shift for themselves, the dams immediately turn their thoughts to the business of a second brood; while the first flight, shaken off and rejected by their nurses, congregate in great flocks, and are the birds that are seen clustering and hovering, on sunny mornings and evenings, round towers and steeples, and on the roofs of churches and houses. These congregations usually begin to take place about the first week in August; and, therefore, we may conclude that, by that time, the first flight is pretty well over. The young of this species do not quit their abodes altogether; but the more forward birds get abroad some days before the rest. These, approaching the eaves of buildings, and playing about before them, make people think that several old ones attend one nest.† They are often capricious in fixing on a nesting-

* The dung is enclosed in a thin membrane and this enables the parent birds to convey it away more easily in their mouths. This is done both for cleanliness and protection, for if the exuviæ of the young birds accumulated around the nest, it would be more readily discovered. I have watched a blackbird when in removing the excrement, the membrane has burst in his mouth, and have seen him shake his head, and show evident symptoms of annoyance. It is generally suffered to drop during the flight of the parent bird from the nest.—Ed.

† I have seen the whole roof of the tennis court at Hampton Court covered in the autumn with young martins. After playing about for some days, they congregate on the aits of the river Thames.—Ed.

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place, beginning many edifices, and leaving them unfinished; but, when once a nest is completed in a sheltered place, it serves for several seasons. Those which breed in a ready-finished house get the start, in hatching, of those that build new, by ten days or a fortnight. These industrious artificers are at their labours in the long days before four in the morning: when they fix their materials, they plaster them on with their chins, moving their heads with a quick vibratory motion. They dip and wash as they fly sometimes, in very hot weather, but not so frequently as swallows. It has been observed, that martins usually build to a north-east or north-west aspect, that the heat of the sun may not crack and destroy their nests; but instances are also remembered where they bred for many years in vast abundance in an hot stifled inn-yard, against a wall facing to the south.

Birds in general are wise in their choice of situation; but, in this neighbourhood, every summer, is seen a strong proof to the contrary, at an house without eaves, in an exposed district, where some martins build, year by year, in the corners of the windows. But, as the corners of these windows (which face to the south-east and south-west) are too shallow, the nests are washed down every hard rain; and yet these birds drudge on to no purpose, from summer to summer, without changing their aspect or house. It is a piteous sight to see them labouring when half their nest is washed away, and bringing dirt "*generis lapsi sarcire ruinas.*" Thus is instinct a most wonderfully unequal faculty; in some instances so much above reason; in other respects, so far below it! Martins love to frequent towns, especially if there are great lakes and rivers at hand; nay, they even affect the close air of London. And I have not only seen them nesting in the Borough, but even in the Strand and Fleet-street;* but, then, it was obvious, from the dinginess of their aspect, that their feathers partook of the filth of that sooty

* When the Hudson's Bay Company formed a new settlement in North America, they found the nests of swallows on the faces of the rocky cliffs, near Fort Chepewyan. Soon afterwards the birds built their nests under the eaves of the dwelling-house, which were about six feet above a balcony that extends the whole length of the building, and is a frequent promenade. They had thus to graze the heads of the passengers on entering their nests, and yet they preferred the dwelling-house to more lofty places.—Dr. Richardson.

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atmosphere. Martins are, by far, the least agile of the four species; their wings and tails are short, and, therefore, they are not capable of such surprising turns, and quick and glancing evolutions, as the swallow. Accordingly, they make use of a placid, easy motion, in a middle region of the air, seldom mounting to any great height, and never sweeping along together over the surface of the ground or water. They do not wander far for food, but affect sheltered districts, over some lake, or under some hanging wood, or in some hollow vale, especially in windy weather. They breed the latest of all the swallow kind: in 1772, they had nestlings on to October the twenty-first, and are never without unfledged young as late as Michaelmas.

As the summer declines, the congregating flocks increase in numbers daily by the constant accession of the second broods: till at last they swarm in myriads upon myriads round the villages on the Thames, darkening the face of the sky as they frequent the aits of that river, where they roost. They retire, the bulk of them I mean, in vast flocks together, about the beginning of October; but have appeared, of late years, in a considerable flight, in this neighbourhood, for one day or two, as late as November the third and sixth, after they were supposed to have been gone for more than a fortnight.* They, therefore, withdraw with us the latest of any

* The following remarks on birds of passage were sent me by an intelligent naval officer and naturalist:—

"Birds do not always migrate at night, nor in fine weather and fair winds only: on the 25th of September, 1848, beating up channel, wind north-east fresh, weather raw, hazy and unpleasant, hundreds of small birds crossed, making direct for the coast of France; they were not in flocks, but singly or in small parties; the distance was about 100 miles to the nearest land. The weather looked very threatening but did not become any worse, very few took notice of the vessel, but continued the direct course and would probably reach land in four or five hours; the species were several, but I could only recognise two, a green sylvia and the stonechat; the latter flew as on shore, with its usual weak jerking flight, only a few feet above the water. A week before, when about 400 miles from land, one of the latter came on board, remained a short time, then departed and returned in the evening, was again seen next morning, left again (there were at this time several vessels in sight, so that the poor little fellow no doubt visited them all), in the evening returned and flew completely exhausted into the open porthole of one of the cabins, and lay almost dead on the bed; a little water revived him, and the next day I fed him with about fifty flies, spiders, &c., with plenty of meat, which he took eagerly, but my

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species. Unless these birds are very short-lived, indeed, or unless they do not return to the district where they are bred, they must undergo vast devastation somehow and somewhere; for the birds that return yearly bear no manner of proportion to the birds that retire.

House-martins are distinguished from their congeners by having their legs covered with soft downy feathers down to their toes. They are no songsters, but twitter, in a pretty, inward, soft manner, in their nests. During the time of breeding, they are often greatly molested with fleas.

## LETTER LVI.

TO THE SAME.

RINGMER, near LEWES, *Dec.* 9, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—I received your last favour just as I was setting out for this place; and am pleased to find that my monography met with your approbation. My remarks are the result of many years' observation; and are, I trust, true on the whole; though I do not pretend to say that they are perfectly void of mistake, or that a more nice observer might not make many additions, since subjects of this kind are inexhaustible.

poor little emigrant was dead the next morning: poor little fellow, the long continued easterly winds had driven him completely out of his reckoning, and from the appearance of his emaciated body when I skinned him, he had probably been seven or eight days without food. We are apt to imagine that because some birds fly to Africa, they must be tired before they get there, but I do not see any occasion for any of our birds to go a greater distance than across the channel, and then they may go southward by easy stages: the greatest distance that I am aware of that a (land) bird of passage has to fly, is from Australia to New Zealand, more than 1000 miles without one resting place. yet this is accomplished by two beautiful species of cuckoo, one of those is not larger than a wagtail, yet even this long flight may be made in little more than one day. The natives say these birds come from Hawaihi; if it is a fact that they are found there, it will prove not only the great range of flight, but confirm the account of the natives having originally come from thence, and likewise tend to show how correct they are in their observations of nature, and how well they remember all their ancient traditions."—H. C.

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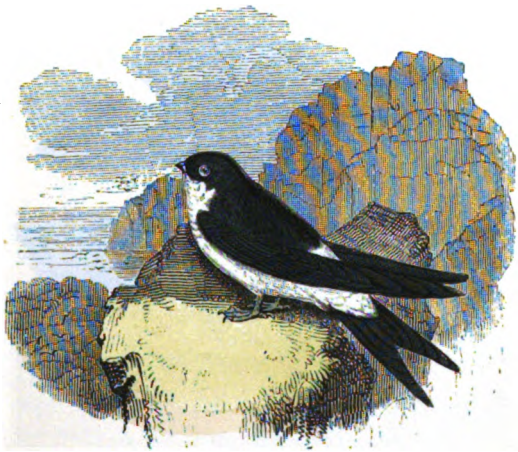

THE HOUSE MARTIN.

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If you think my letter worthy the notice of your respectable Society, you are at liberty to lay it before them; and they will consider it, I hope, as it was intended, as a humble attempt to promote a more minute inquiry into natural history,—into the life and conversation of animals. Perhaps, hereafter, I may be induced to take the house-swallow under consideration; and from that proceed to the rest of the British *hirundines*.

Though I have now travelled the Sussex Downs upwards of thirty years, yet I still investigate that chain of majestic mountains with fresh admiration year by year; and I think I see new beauties every time I traverse it. The range, which runs from Chichester eastward as far as East Bourn, is about sixty miles in length, and is called the South Downs, properly speaking, only round Lewes. As you pass along, you command a noble view of the wold, or weald, on one hand, and the broad downs and sea, on the other. Mr. Ray used to visit a family* just at the foot of these hills, and was so ravished with the prospect from Plympton-plain, near Lewes, that he mentions those capes in his *Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation*, with the utmost satisfaction, and thinks them equal to anything he had seen in the finest parts of Europe.

For my own part, I think there is somewhat peculiarly sweet and amusing in the shapely figured aspect of chalk hills, in preference to those of stone, which are rugged, broken, abrupt, and shapeless.

Perhaps I may be singular in my opinion, and not so happy as to convey to you the same idea, but I never contemplate these mountains without thinking I perceive somewhat analogous to growth in their gentle swellings and smooth fungus-like protuberances, their fluted sides, and regular hollows and slopes, that carry at once the air of vegetative dilatation and expansion; or, was there ever a time when these immense masses of calcareous matter were thrown into fermentation by some adventitious moisture,—were raised and leavened into such shapes by some plastic power, and so made to swell and heave their broad backs into the sky, so much above the less animated clay of the wild below?

* Mr. Courthope, of Danny.

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By what I can guess from the admeasurements of the hills that have been taken round my house, I should suppose that these hills surmount the wild, at an average, at about the rate of five hundred feet.

One thing is very remarkable as to the sheep: from the westward, till you get to the river Adur, all the flocks have horns, and smooth white faces, and white legs; and a hornless sheep is rarely to be seen. But as soon as you pass that river eastward, and mount Beeding-hill, all the flocks at once become hornless, or, as they call them, poll-sheep; and have, moreover, black faces, with a white tuft of wool on their foreheads, and speckled and spotted legs: so that you would think that the flocks of Laban were pasturing on one side of the stream, and the variegated breed of his son-in-law, Jacob, were cantoned on the other. And this diversity holds good respectively on each side, from the valley of Bramber and Beeding to the eastward, and westward all the whole length of the downs. If you talk with the shepherds on this subject, they tell you that the case has been so from time immemorial; and smile at your simplicity if you ask them, whether the situation of these two different breeds might not be reversed? (However, an intelligent friend of mine near Chichester is determined to try the experiment; and has, this autumn, at the hazard of being laughed at, introduced a parcel of black-faced hornless rams among his horned western ewes.) The black-faced poll-sheep have the shortest legs and the finest wool.*

As I had hardly ever before travelled these downs at so late a season of the year, I was determined to keep as sharp a look-out as possible so near the southern coast, with respect to the summer short-winged birds of passage. We make great inquiries concerning the withdrawing of the swallow kind, without examining enough into the causes why this tribe is never to be seen in winter; for, *entre nous*, the disappearing of the latter is more marvellous than that of the former, and much more unaccountable. The *hirundines*, if they please, are certainly capable of migration; and yet, no doubt, are often found in a torpid state; but redstarts,

* If Mr. White was now alive he would be led to think very differently, so great has been the improvement of late years in our breed of sheep.—Ed.

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nightingales, white-throats, black-caps, &c., &c., are very ill provided for long flights; have never been once found, as I ever heard of, in a torpid state; and yet can never be supposed, in such troops, from year to year, to dodge and elude the eyes of the curious and inquisitive, which, from day to day, discern the other small birds that are known to abide our winters. But, notwithstanding all my care, I saw nothing like a summer bird of passage; and, what is more strange, not one wheatear, though they abound so in the autumn as to be a considerable perquisite to the shepherds that take them; and though many are seen to my knowledge all the winter through, in many parts of the south of England. The most intelligent shepherd tells me, that some few of these birds appear on the downs in March, and then withdraw to breed, probably, in warrens and stone quarries: now and then a nest is ploughed up in a fallow on the downs, under a furrow; but it is thought a rarity. At the time of wheat-harvest, they begin to be taken in great numbers; are sent for sale in vast quantities to Brighthelmstone and Tunbridge, and appear at the tables of all the gentry that entertain with any degree of elegance. About Michaelmas they retire, and are seen no more till March. Though these birds are, when in season, in great plenty on the South Downs round Lewes, yet at East Bourn, which is the eastern extremity of those downs, they abound much more. One thing is very remarkable, that, though in the height of the season so many hundreds of dozens are taken, yet they are never seen to flock; and it is a rare thing to see more than three or four at a time: so that there must be a perpetual flitting and constant progressive succession. It does not appear that any wheatears are taken to the westward of Houghton-bridge, which stands on the river Arun.

I did not fail to look particularly after my new migration of ring-ousels; and to take notice whether they continued on the downs to this season of the year; as I had formerly remarked them in the month of October, all the way from Chichester to Lewes, wherever there were any shrubs and covert; but not one bird of this sort came within my observation. I only saw a few larks and whinchats, some rooks, and several kites and buzzards.

About midsummer, a flight of crossbills comes to the

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pine-groves about this house, but never make any long stay.*

The old tortoise, that I have mentioned in a former letter, still continues in this garden; and retired under ground about the 20th of November, and came out again for one day on the 30th: it lies now buried in a wet swampy border under a wall facing to the south, and is enveloped at present in mud and mire!

Here is a large rookery round this house, the inhabitants of which seem to get their livelihood very easily; for they spend the greatest part of the day on their nest-trees when the weather is mild. These rooks retire every evening, all the winter, from this rookery, where they only call by the way, as they are going to roost in deep woods; at the dawn of day they always revisit their nest-trees, and are preceded a few minutes by a flight of daws that act as it were as their harbingers.

## LETTER LVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 2, 1769.

DEAR SIR,—The house-swallow, or chimney-swallow, is, undoubtedly, the first comer of all the British *hirundines;* and appears in general on or about the 13th of April, as I have remarked from many years' observation. Not but now and then a straggler is seen much earlier; and, in particular, when I was a boy, I observed a swallow for a whole day together on a sunny warm Shrove-Tuesday; which day could not fall out later than the middle of March, and often happened early in February.

It is worth remarking, that these birds are seen first about lakes and mill-ponds; and it is also very particular, that, if these early visitors happen to find frost and snow, as was the

* A pretty large flock of crossbills visited Ambleside, in Westmoreland, in October, 1828, frequenting the plantations of young larches.—W. J.

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case of the two dreadful springs of 1770 and 1771, they immediately withdraw for a time; a circumstance this, much more in favour of hiding than migration; since it is much more probable that a bird should retire to its hybernaculum just at hand, than return for a week or two only to warmer latitudes.

The swallow, though called the chimney-swallow, by no means builds altogether in chimneys, but often within barns and out-houses, against the rafters; and so she did in Virgil's time,—

——————— "Ante
Garrula quàm tignis nidos suspendat hirundo."

"Before the noisy swallow's nest depends,
From the strong beam that through the roof extends."

In Sweden, she builds in barns, and is called *ladu swala* (the barn-swallow.) Besides, in the warmer parts of Europe, there are no chimneys to houses, except they are English-built. In these countries she constructs her nest in porches, and gateways, and galleries, and open halls.*

Here and there a bird may affect some odd, peculiar place; as we have known a swallow build down the shaft of an old well, through which chalk had been formerly drawn up, for the purpose of manure; but, in general, with us this *hirundo* breeds in chimneys, and loves to haunt those stacks where there is a constant fire—no doubt for the sake of warmth. Not that it can subsist in the immediate shaft where there is a fire; but prefers one adjoining to that of the kitchen, and disregards the perpetual smoke of that funnel, as I have often observed with some degree of wonder.

Five or six, or more feet down the chimney, does this little bird begin to form her nest, about the middle of May, which consists, like that of the house-martin, of a crust or shell composed of dirt or mud, mixed with short pieces of straw, to render it tough and permanent; with this difference, that whereas the shell of the martin is nearly hemispheric, that of the swallow is open at the top, and like half a deep dish:

* I have known a swallow make its nest on the knocker of the hall-door at Pipe Hall, in Warwickshire; and in a low archway through which the water was conducted from a mill-wheel near Dover.—Ed.

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this nest is lined with fine grasses and feathers, which are often collected as they float in the air.

Wonderful is the address which this adroit bird shows all day long, in ascending and descending with security through so narrow a pass. When hovering over the mouth of the funnel, the vibrations of her wings acting on the confined air, occasion a rumbling like thunder. It is not improbable that the dam submits to this inconvenient situation so low in the shaft in order to secure her broods from rapacious birds, and particularly from owls, which frequently fall down chimneys, perhaps in attempting to get at these nestlings.

The swallow lays from four to six white eggs, dotted with red specks; and brings out her first brood about the last week in June, or the first week in July. The progressive method by which the young are introduced into life, is very amusing: first, they emerge from the shaft with difficulty enough, and often fall down into the rooms below: for a day or so, they are fed on the chimney-top, and then are conducted to the dead leafless bough of some tree, where, sitting in a row, they are attended with great assiduity, and may then be called perchers. In a day or two more, they become fliers, but are still unable to take their own food; therefore, they play about near the place where the dams are hawking for flies; and when a mouthful is collected, at a certain signal given, the dam and the nestling advance, rising towards each other, and meeting at an angle, the young one all the while uttering such a little quick note of gratitude and complacency, that a person must have paid very little regard to the wonders of Nature that has not often remarked this feat.

The dam betakes herself immediately to the business of a second brood as soon as she is disengaged from her first, which at once associates with the first broods of house-martins, and with them congregates, clustering on sunny roofs, towers, and trees. This *hirundo* brings out her second brood towards the middle and end of August.*

* The number of insects taken on the wing by swallows, especially when they have young to feed, must be enormous, and their utility is great in proportion. Let me give an instance of it. In a village in Gloucestershire where there were several hop-gardens, some young farmers amused themselves for two or three summers in practising with their guns on the swallows, and either killed or drove them away. The consequence was that the hop-binds were infested

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All the summer long is the swallow a most instructive pattern of unwearied industry and affection; for, from morning to night, while there is a family to be supported, she spends the whole day in skimming close to the ground, and exerting the most sudden turns and quick evolutions. Avenues, and long walks, under hedges, and pasture-fields, and mown meadows where cattle graze, are her delight, especially if there are trees interspersed, because in such spots insects most abound. When a fly is taken, a smart snap from her bill is heard, resembling the noise at the shutting of a watch-case; but the motion of the mandibles is too quick for the eye.

The swallow, probably the male bird, is the excubitor to house-martins and other little birds, announcing the approach of birds of prey; for as soon as an hawk appears, with a shrill alarming note he calls all the swallows and martins about him, who pursue in a body, and buffet and strike their enemy till they have driven him from the village, darting down from above on his back, and rising in a perpendicular line in perfect security. This bird also will sound the alarm and strike at cats when they climb on the roofs of houses, or otherwise approach the nests. Each species of *hirundo* drinks as it flies along, sipping the surface of the water; but the swallow alone, in general, washes on the wing, by dropping into a pool for many times together. In very hot weather, house-martins and bank-martins dip and wash a little.

The swallow is a delicate songster, and, in soft sunny weather, sings both perching and flying; on trees in a kind of concert, and on chimney-tops; is also a bold flier, ranging to distant downs and commons even in windy weather, which the other species seem much to dislike; nay, even frequenting

by insects and much injured. This, however, was not the case in an adjoining village, in which a friend of mine, a benevolent clergyman, resided, and who persuaded his parishioners to protect the swallow.

I have often thought that if the extensive hop-growers in Kent and other countries were to erect a sort of cheap tower, with projecting eaves, in their hop-grounds, and thatch them over, swallows would build under them, and thus colonies of these birds would be formed, which would clear the hops of numerous noxious insects. The suggestion is, I am persuaded, worthy of attention. The birds would then be able to fulfil the purpose for which a kind Providence had sent them. Our brethren of the United States harbour and protect the swallows as much as possible about their dwellings.—Ed.



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exposed sea-port towns, and making little excursions over the salt water. Horsemen on wide downs are often closely attended by a little party of swallows for miles together, which play before and behind them, sweeping around, and collecting all the skulking insects that are roused by the trampling of the horses' feet. When the wind blows hard, without this expedient, they are often forced to settle to pick up their lurking prey.

This species feeds much on little *coleoptera*, as well as on gnats and flies, and often settles on dug ground, or paths, for gravels to grind and digest its food. Before they depart, for some weeks, to a bird they forsake houses and chimneys, and roost in trees, and usually withdraw about the beginning of October, though some few stragglers may appear on at times till the first week in November.

Some few pairs haunt the new and open streets of London next the fields, but do not enter, like the house-martin, the close and crowded parts of the city.

Both male and female are distinguished from their congeners by the length and forkedness of their tails. They are undoubtedly the most nimble of all the species; and when the male pursues the female in amorous chase, they then go beyond their usual speed, and exert a rapidity almost too quick for the eye to follow.

After this circumstantial detail of the life and discerning στοργὴ of the swallow, I shall add, for your further amusement, an anecdote or two, not much in favour of her sagacity.*

* The accompanying very interesting communication made to me will afford some contradiction to this remark:—

"June, 1848. As I know you are interested in the fate of all living beings, I hesitate not to relate the following circumstances. A pair of swallows many years ago built their nest in our carriage-house, and brought up two broods of young ones; for their accommodation our man John, who is a most kind-hearted fellow, put up a perch, for which they seemed grateful. Since that time they have come with unerring instinct year after year to the same spot; John always announcing their arrival with great glee, and I believe considers them as a sort of guardian spirits of the building. This year another pair built their house in the hay-loft, some distance from, and not in sight of the original settlers; however they spied out the perch, and with true democratic insolence took possession of it. The old family disdained to mix with the parvenues, and the result was frequent battles and noisy émeutes. Whether these affairs

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A certain swallow built, for two years together, on the handles of a pair of garden-shears, that were stuck up against the boards in an out-house, and therefore must have her nest

brought on the following catastrophe, I know not. John going as usual to lock the carriage-house door a few evenings since—for, strange to say, the birds are locked in every night—found, to his great horror, the nest on the floor broken to atoms, and, scattered about, five young birds partially fledged. The parent birds were fixed on the perch and, seemed incapable of motion through grief. John immediately got a small round basket, placed in it a nest that had been recently deserted by a family of starlings, then put in the young birds, and next proceeded to fix the basket on the perch near the place occupied by the destroyed nest. The old birds watched the proceedings with great gravity, and as soon as John had removed his ladder, they went on the edge of the basket, looked in and appeared to be well satisfied with the arrangement, and have continued since to the delight of us all to tend and feed their young, as if they were still dwelling in their mud-built cottage. The present family will soon take flight, and I am anxious to know what the proceedings will be in regard to the second brood.

"September, 1848. The swallows have not produced a second family, although after the flight of the first they made the nest in the basket complete, and which they still continue to occupy. I intend to let the basket remain, and I will, if permitted, report proceedings to you next year.

"July, 1849. I must give you the sequel of the history of my mysterious friends the swallows, whose adventures last year I related to you. The pair arrived on the 28th of April, which my kind man John announced to me, and further that they had examined the basket-nest, the asylum of their young ones of last season. We now watched their proceedings with much interest, but for some time could not arrive at their intended plans; one point, however, was certain, there was no attempt made to erect the usual mud tenement. The question was at length set at rest, the basket-nest was adopted, some slight repairs made, and the lady took possession of it, her lord gravely perching by the side of the basket. After a certain time we could not resist taking a peep into the basket during the absence of the matron, and were gratified at seeing four eggs in the nest; since, all has gone on well, the young family have arrived at days of discretion (I hope), at least they have all been introduced into the grand air by their parents, and taught the rudiments of their future pursuits. But their final departure from their basket-home has not yet taken place, for this morning I saw the four perched on its edge attended by their mamma.

"November, 1849. I think I told you that the swallows took possession of the basket-house: the result was two full families of young ones, both arrived, I presume, at days of discretion, at least they all emulated and I think equalled the parent birds in the pursuit of their varied prey at an early period of the season. Indeed they all took their departure about the middle of September. The following is most interesting and I am not aware that it has been before noticed. The basket-nest was fixed on the end of a piece of wood; the other portion of which, about two feet and a half in length,



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spoiled whenever that implement was wanted. And, what is stranger still, another bird of the same species built its nest on the wings and body of an owl, that happened by accident to hang dead and dry from the rafter of a barn. This owl, with the nest on its wings, and with eggs in the nest, was brought as a curiosity worthy the most elegant private museum in Great Britain. The owner, struck with the oddity of the sight, furnished the bringer with a large shell, or conch, desiring him to fix it just where the owl hung. The person did as he was ordered; and the following year, a pair, probably the same pair, built their nest in the conch, and laid their eggs.

The owl and the conch make a strange, grotesque appearance, and are not the least curious specimens in that wonderful collection of art and nature.*

Thus is instinct in animals, taken the least out of its way, an undistinguishing, limited faculty, and blind to every circumstance that does not immediately respect self-preservation, or lead at once to the propagation or support of their species.

## LETTER LVIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 14, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—I received your favour of the eighth, and am pleased to find that you read my little history of the swallow

served the old and young birds as a perch. After the first brood of four took strong flight, no more was seen of them in the carriage-house till the evening preceding the above-mentioned final departure, when my man hearing a great chattering amongst his favourites, and fearing a cat had got among them, hurried to the rescue, when, to his astonishment, he beheld the two old birds, and all their annual progeny (eleven) perched in a line, evidently receiving instructions relative to their mysterious journey: be that as it may, on the following morning all were gone!"

The above remarks also prove that swallows return to the same locality.—ED.

* Sir Ashton Lever's Museum

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with your usual candour; nor was I the less pleased to find that you made objections where you saw reason.

As to the quotations, it is difficult to say precisely which species of *hirundo* Virgil might intend, in the lines in question, since the ancients did not attend to specific differences, like modern naturalists; yet somewhat may be gathered, enough to incline me to suppose, that, in the two passages quoted, the poet had his eye on the swallow.

In the first place, the epithet *garrula* * suits the swallow well, who is a great songster, and not the martin, which is rather a mute bird, and when it sings, is so inward as scarce to be heard. Besides, if *tignum* in that place signifies a rafter, rather than a beam, as it seems to me to do, then I think it must be the swallow that is alluded to, and not the martin, since the former does frequently build within the roof, against the rafters, while the latter always, as far as I have been able to observe, builds without the roof, against eaves and cornices.

As to the simile, too much stress must not be laid on it; yet the epithet *nigra* speaks plainly in favour of the swallow, whose back and wings are very black; while the rump of the martin is milk-white, its back and wings blue, and all its under part white as snow. Nor can the clumsy motions (comparatively clumsy) of the martin well represent the sudden and artful evolutions, and quick turns, which Juturna gave to her brother's chariot, so as to elude the eager pursuit of the enraged Æneas. The verb *sonat* also seems to imply a bird that is somewhat loquacious.†

* So Anacreon—

"Silly swallow! *prating* thing."—Ed.

† "*Nigra* velut magnas domini cum divitis ædes
Pervolat, et pennis alta atria lustrat hirundo,
Pabula parva legens, nidisque loquacibus escas:
Et nunc porticibus vacuis, nunc humida circum
Stagna *sonat.*"

"As the dark swallow in a splendid hall,
With gloomy pinions flits along each wall,
Of scatter'd crumbs and humble food in quest
To still the clamour of the craving nest;
Now through the porch her agile figure bounds,
Now by the lake her noisy note resounds."

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We have had a very wet autumn and winter, so as to raise the springs to a pitch beyond anything since 1764, which was a remarkable year for floods and high waters. The land-springs, which we call levants, break out much on the downs of Sussex, Hampshire, and Wiltshire. The country people say, when the levants rise, corn will always be dear; meaning, that when the earth is so glutted with water as to send forth springs on the downs and uplands, that the corn vales must be drowned: and so it has proved for these ten or eleven years past: for land-springs have never obtained more since the memory of man than during that period, nor has there been known a greater scarcity of all sorts of grain, considering the great improvements of modern husbandry. Such a run of wet seasons, a century or two ago, would, I am persuaded, have occasioned a famine. Therefore, pamphlets and newspaper letters that talk of combinations, tend to inflame and mislead, since we must not expect plenty till Providence sends us more favourable seasons.

The wheat of last year, all round this district, and in the county of Rutland, and elsewhere, yields remarkably bad; and our wheat on the ground, by the continual late sudden vicissitudes from fierce frost to pouring rains, looks poorly, and the turnips rot very fast.

## LETTER LIX.

### TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *February* 26, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—The sand-martin, or bank-martin, is by much the least of any of the British *hirundines*, and, as far as we have ever seen, the smallest known *hirundo;* though Brisson asserts that there is one much smaller, and that is the *hirundo esculenta.*

But it is much to be regretted that it is scarce possible for any observer to be so full and exact as he could wish in reciting the circumstances attending the life and conversa-

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tion of this little bird, since it is *fera naturâ*, at least in this part of the kingdom, disclaiming all domestic attachments, and haunting wild heaths and commons where there are large lakes; while the other species, especially the swallow and house-martin, are remarkably gentle and domesticated, and never seem to think themselves safe but under the protection of man.

Here are in this parish, in the sand-pits and banks of the lake of Wolmer Forest, several colonies of these birds; and yet they are never seen in the village, nor do they at all frequent the cottages that are scattered about in that wild district. The only instance I ever remember where this species haunts any building, is at the town of Bishop's Waltham, in this county, where many sand-martins nestle and breed in the scaffold holes of the back wall of William of Wykeham's stables; but then this wall stands in a very sequestered and retired enclosure, and faces upon a large and beautiful lake. And, indeed, this species seems so to delight in large waters, that no instance occurs of their abounding but near vast pools or rivers; and, in particular, it has been remarked that they swarm in the banks of the Thames, in some places below London Bridge.

It is curious to observe with what different degrees of architectonic skill Providence has endowed birds of the same genus, and so nearly correspondent in their general mode of life; for, while the swallow and the house-martin discover the greatest address in raising and securely fixing crusts or shells of loam, as cunabula for their young, the bank-martin terebrates a round and regular hole in the sand or earth, which is serpentine, horizontal, and about two feet deep. At the inner end of this burrow does this bird deposit, in a good degree of safety, her rude nest, consisting of fine grasses and feathers, usually goose feathers, very inartificially laid together.*

Perseverance will accomplish anything: though at first

* M. Eugène Robert communicated to the Academy of Sciences at Paris a curious observation that he had made in the case of some nests of the sand-martin, which he had an opportunity of examining. He noticed that they were lined or plastered over with a sort of matter, which he believed to be the spawn of fish, and which helped to prevent the sand from falling down into the nest.—W. Jenyns.

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one would be disinclined to believe that this weak bird, with her soft and tender bill and claws, should ever be able to bore the stubborn sand-bank, without entirely disabling herself; yet with these feeble instruments have I seen a pair of them make great dispatch, and could remark how much they had scooped that day, by the fresh sand which ran down the bank, and was of a different colour from that which lay loose and bleached in the sun.

In what space of time these little artists are able to mine and finish these cavities I have never been able to discover, for reasons given above; but it would be a matter worthy of observation, where it falls in the way of any naturalist, to make his remarks. This I have often taken notice of, that several holes of different depths are left unfinished at the end of summer. To imagine that these beginnings were intentionally made, in order to be in the greater forwardness for next spring, is allowing, perhaps, too much foresight and skill to a simple bird. May not the cause of these *latebræ* being left unfinished arise from their meeting in those places with strata too harsh, hard, and solid for their purpose, which they relinquish, and go to a fresh spot that works more freely? or may they not in other places fall in with a soil as much too loose and mouldering, liable to founder, and threatening to overwhelm them and their labours?

One thing is remarkable, that, after some years, the old holes are forsaken, and new ones bored; perhaps because the old habitations grow foul and fetid from long use, or because they may so abound with fleas as to become untenantable. This species of swallow, moreover, is strangely annoyed with fleas; and we have seen fleas, bed-fleas, (*pulex irritans*,) swarming at the mouths of these holes, like bees on the stools of their hives.

The following circumstance should by no means be omitted,—that these birds do not make use of their caverns by way of hybernacula, as might be expected; since banks so perforated have been dug out with care in the winter, when nothing was found but empty nests.

The sand-martin arrives much about the same time with the swallow, and lays, as she does, from four to six white eggs. But, as this species is *cryptogame*, carrying on the business of nidification, incubation, and the support of its

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young in the dark, it would not be so easy to ascertain the time of breeding, were it not for the coming forth of the broods, which appear much about the time, or rather somewhat earlier, than those of the swallow. The nestlings are supported in common, like those of their congeners, with gnats and other small insects, and sometimes they are fed with *libellulæ* (dragon-flies) almost as long as themselves. In the last week in June we have seen a row of these sitting on a rail, near a great pool, as perchers, and so young and helpless, as easily to be taken by hand; but whether the dams ever feed them on the wing, as swallows and house-martins do, we have never yet been able to determine; nor do we know whether they pursue and attack birds of prey.

When they happen to breed near hedges and enclosures, they are dispossessed of their breeding-holes by the house-sparrow, which is, on the same account, a fell adversary to house-martins.

These *hirundines* are no songsters, but rather mute, making only a little harsh noise when a person approaches their nests. They seem not to be of a sociable turn, never with us congregating with their congeners in the autumn. Undoubtedly they breed a second time, like the house-martin and swallow; and withdraw about Michaelmas.

Though in some particular districts they may happen to abound, yet on the whole, in the south of England at least, is this much the rarest species; for there are few towns or large villages but what abound with house-martins; few churches, towers, or steeples but what are haunted by some swifts; scarce a hamlet or single cottage-chimney that has not its swallow; while the bank-martins, scattered here and there, live a sequestered life among some abrupt sand-hills, and in the banks of some few rivers.

These birds have a peculiar manner of flying, flitting about with odd jerks and vacillations, not unlike the motions of a butterfly. Doubtless the flight of all *hirundines* is influenced by, and adapted to, the peculiar sort of insects which furnish their food. Hence it would be worth inquiry to examine what particular genus of insects affords the principal food of each respective species of swallow.

Notwithstanding what has been advanced above, some few sand-martins, I see, haunt the skirts of London, frequenting

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the dirty pools in St. George's Fields, and about Whitechapel. The question is where these build, since there are no banks or bold shores in that neighbourhood? Perhaps they nestle in the scaffold-holes of some old or new deserted building. They dip and wash as they fly sometimes, like the house-martin and swallow.

Sand-martins differ from their congeners in the diminutiveness of their size, and in their colour, which is what is usually called a mouse-colour. Near Valencia, in Spain, they are taken, says Willughby, and sold in the markets for the table, and are called by the country people, probably from their desultory, jerking manner of flight, *Papillon de Montagna.*

## LETTER LX.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 2, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—Before your letter arrived, and of my own accord, I had been remarking and comparing the tails of the male and female swallow, and this ere any young broods appeared; so that there was no danger of confounding the dams with their *pulli*; and, besides, as they were then always in pairs, and busied in the employ of nidification, there could be no room for mistaking the sexes, nor the individuals of different chimneys, the one for the other. From all my observations, it constantly appeared that each sex has the long feathers in its tail that give it that forked shape; with this difference, that they are longer in the tail of the male than in that of the female.

Nightingales, when their young first come abroad, and are helpless, make a plaintive and a jarring noise; and also a snapping or cracking, pursuing people along the hedges as they walk: these last sounds seem intended for menace and defiance.

The grasshopper-lark chirps all night in the height of summer.

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Swans turn white the second year, and breed the third.

Weasels prey on moles, as appears by their being sometimes caught in mole-traps.

Sparrow-hawks sometimes breed in old crows' nests; and the kestrel in churches and ruins.

There are supposed to be two* sorts of eels in the island of Ely. The threads sometimes discovered in eels are perhaps their young: the generation of eels is very dark and mysterious.

Hen-harriers breed on the ground, and seem never to settle on trees.

When redstarts shake their tails, they move them horizontally, as dogs do when they fawn: the tail of the wagtail, when in motion, bobs up and down, like that of a jaded horse.

Hedge-sparrows have a remarkable flirt with their wings in breeding time: as soon as frosty mornings come, they make a very piping, plaintive noise.

Many birds which become silent about midsummer reassume their notes again in September; as the thrush, blackbird, woodlark, willow-wren, &c.; hence August† is by much the most mute month, the spring, summer, and autumn through. Are birds induced to sing again because the temperament of autumn resembles that of spring?

Linnæus ranges plants geographically; palms inhabit the tropics; grasses the temperate zones; and mosses and lichens the polar circles: no doubt animals may be classed in the same manner with propriety.

House-sparrows‡ build under eaves in the spring; as the weather becomes hotter, they get out for coolness, and nest in plum-trees and apple-trees. These birds have been known sometimes to build in rooks' nests, and sometimes in the forks of boughs under rooks' nests.

* There are three species of eels. See Mr. Yarrell's work on British fishes. Eels are infested with intestinal worms, a circumstance which has induced many to suppose them to be viviparous, myself amongst the rest. The generation of eels is now well ascertained.—Ed.

† The robin is the only bird I hear sing in August. They perhaps moult earlier than other song-birds, for in the moulting season birds are perfectly mute.—Ed.

‡ There two species of sparrows,—the house and the tree sparrow. See Mr. Yarrell's *British Birds*.—Ed.

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As my neighbour was housing a rick, he observed that his dogs devoured all the little red mice that they could catch, but rejected the common mice; and that his cats eat the common mice, refusing the red.

Red-breasts sing all through the spring, summer, and autumn. The reason that they are called autumn songsters is, because in the two first seasons their voices are lost and drowned in the general chorus: in the latter, their song becomes distinguishable. Many songsters of the autumn seem to be the young cock red-breast of that year: notwithstanding the prejudices in their favour, they do much mischief in gardens to the summer fruits.*

The titmouse, which early in February begins to make two quaint notes, like the whetting of a saw,† is the marsh titmouse; the great titmouse sings with three cheerful joyous notes, and begins about the same time.

Wrens sing all the winter through, frost excepted.

House-martins came remarkably late this year, both in Hampshire and Devonshire: is this circumstance for or against either hiding or migration?

Most birds drink, sipping at intervals; but pigeons take a long continued draught, like quadrupeds.

Notwithstanding what I have said in a former letter, no grey crows were ever known to breed on Dartmoor; it was my mistake.

The appearance and flying of the *scarabæus solstitialis*, or fern-chafer, commence with the month of July, and cease about the end of it. These scarabs are the constant food of *caprimulgi*, or fern-owls, through that period. They abound on the chalky downs, and in some sandy districts, but not in the clays.

In the garden of the Black Bear Inn, in the town of Reading, is a stream or canal, running under the stables, and out into the fields on the other side of the road: in this water are many carps, which lie rolling about in sight, being fed by travellers, who amuse themselves by tossing them bread; but

* They eat also the berries of the ivy, the honeysuckle, and the *euonymus europæus*, or spindle-tree.

† It is undoubtedly the great titmouse, *p. major*, which whets like a saw. I have watched it for a quarter of an hour together; it has also cheerful notes.—W. J.

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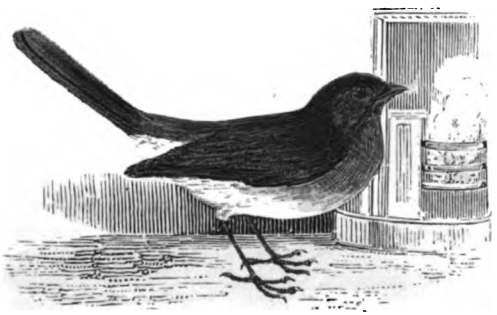

THE ROBIN, OR REDBREAST. (*Rubecula familiaris.*)

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as soon as the weather grows at all severe, these fishes are no longer seen, because they retire under the stables, where they remain till the return of spring. Do they lie in a torpid state? if they do not, how are they supported?

The note of the white-throat, which is continually repeated, and often attended with odd gesticulations on the wing, is harsh and displeasing. These birds seem of pugnacious disposition; for they sing with an erected crest, and attitudes of rivalry and defiance; are shy and wild in breeding-time, avoiding neighbourhoods, and haunting lonely lanes and commons;* nay, even the very tops of the Sussex Downs, where there are bushes and covert; but in July and August, they bring their broods into gardens and orchards, and make great havoc among the summer fruits.

The black-cap has, in common, a full, sweet, deep, loud, and wild pipe; yet that strain is of short continuance, and his motions are desultory; but, when that bird sits calmly and engages in song in earnest, he pours forth very sweet, but inward melody, and expresses great variety of soft and gentle modulations, superior, perhaps, to those of any of our warblers, the nightingale excepted.

Black-caps mostly haunt orchards and gardens: while they warble, their throats are wonderfully distended.

The song of the redstart is superior, though somewhat like that of the white-throat; some birds have a few more notes than others. Sitting very placidly on the top of a tall tree in a village, the cock sings from morning to night; he affects neighbourhoods, and avoids solitude, and loves to build in orchards and about houses; with us he perches on the vane of a tall maypole.

The fly-catcher is, of all our summer birds, the most mute and the most familiar; it also appears the last of any. It builds in a vine, or a sweet-brier, against the wall of a house, or in the hole of a wall, or on the end of a beam or plate, and often close to the post of a door where people are going in and out all day long. This bird does not make the least

* So far from this being the case, a white-throat built its nest in the iron-work on the top of a lamp in Portland Place, and another in the iron-work of one of the beautiful gates of Hampton Court Palace. It is an amicable and amusing bird when its habits are attended to.—Ed.

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pretension to song, but uses a little inward wailing note, when it thinks its young in danger from cats or other annoyances: it breeds but once, and retires early.*

Selborne parish alone can and has exhibited at times more than half the birds that are ever seen in all Sweden: the former has produced more than one hundred and twenty species, the latter only two hundred and twenty-one.† Let me add, also, that it has shown near half the species that were ever known in Great Britain.‡

On a retrospect, I observe that my long letter carries with it a quaint and magisterial air, and is very sententious: but when I recollect that you requested stricture and anecdote, hope you will pardon the didactic manner for the sake of the information it may happen to contain.

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## LETTER LXI.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 28, 1774.

DEAR SIR,—As the swift, or black-martin, is the largest of the British *hirundines*, so it is undoubtedly the latest comer: for I remember but one instance of its appearing before the last week in April; and in some of our late frosty harsh springs, it has not been seen till the beginning of May. This species usually arrives in pairs.

The swift, like the sand-martin, is very defective in architecture, making no crust, or shell, for its nest, but forming it of dry grasses and feathers, very rudely and inartificially put together. With all my attention to these birds, I have never been able once to discover one in the act of collecting

* The *muscicapa grisola*, Linn.—W. J.

† Mr. Yarrell has informed us that near seventy species of birds have been noticed in Kensington Gardens, which considering the situation, as well as the confined nature of the locality, is an unusually great number.—YARRELL'S *British Birds*.

‡ Sweden 221; Great Britain 252 species.

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or carrying in materials: so that I have suspected (since their nests are exactly the same) that they sometimes usurp upon the house-sparrows, and expel them, as sparrows do the house and sand-martin—well remembering that I have seen them squabbling together at the entrance of their holes, and the sparrows up in arms, and much disconcerted at these intruders; and yet I am assured by a nice observer in such matters, that they do collect feathers for their nests in Andalusia, and that he has shot them with such materials in their mouths.

Swifts, like sand-martins, carry on the business of nidification quite in the dark, in crannies of castles, and towers, and steeples, and upon the tops of the walls of churches, under the roof, and therefore cannot be so narrowly watched as those species that build more openly; but, from what I could ever observe, they begin nesting about the middle of May; and I have remarked, from eggs taken, that they have sat hard by the 9th of June. In general, they haunt tall buildings, churches, and steeples, and breed only in such; yet, in this village, some pairs frequent the lowest and meanest cottages, and educate their young under those thatched roofs. We remember but one instance where they breed out of buildings, and that is in the sides of a deep chalk pit near the town of Odiham, in this county, where we have seen many pairs entering the crevices, and skimming and squeaking round the precipices.

As I have regarded these amusive birds with no small attention, if I should advance something new and peculiar with respect to them, and different from all other birds, I might perhaps be credited, especially as my assertion is the result of many years' exact observation. The fact that I would advance is, that swifts tread, or copulate on the wing; and I would wish any nice observer that is startled at this supposition to use his own eyes, and I think he will soon be convinced. In another class of animals, viz., the insect, nothing is so common as to see the different species of many genera in conjunction as they fly. The swift is almost continually on the wing; and as it never settles on the ground, on trees, or roofs, would seldom find opportunity for amorous rites, were it not enabled to indulge them in the air. If any person would watch these birds of a fine morning in May, as

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they are sailing round, at a great height from the ground, he would see, every now and then, one drop on the back of another, and both of them sink down together for many fathoms with a loud piercing shriek. This I take to be the juncture when the business of generation is carrying on.

As the swift eats, drinks, collects materials for its nest, and, as it seems, propagates on the wing, it appears to live more in the air than any other bird, and to perform all functions there save those of sleeping and incubation.

This *hirundo* differs widely from its congeners in laying invariably but two eggs at a time, which are milk-white, long, and peaked at the small end; whereas the other species lay at each brood from four to six. It is a most alert bird, rising very early, and retiring to roost very late, and is on the wing in the height of summer at least sixteen hours. In the longest days it does not withdraw to rest till a quarter before nine in the evening, being the latest of all day birds. Just before they retire, whole groups of them assemble high in the air, and squeak and shoot about with wonderful rapidity. But this bird is never so much alive as in sultry thundery weather, when it expresses great alacrity, and calls forth all its powers. In hot mornings several getting together into little parties dash round the steeples and churches, squeaking as they go in a very clamorous manner: these, by nice observers, are supposed to be males serenading their sitting hens, and not without reason, since they seldom squeak till they come close to the walls or eaves, and since those within utter at the same time a little inward note of complacency.

When the hen has sat hard all day, she rushes forth just as it is almost dark, and stretches and relieves her weary limbs, and snatches a scanty meal for a few minutes, and then returns to her duty of incubation. Swifts, when wantonly and cruelly shot while they have young, discover a little lump of insects in their mouths, which they pouch and hold under their tongue. In general, they feed in a much higher district than the other species; a proof that gnats and other insects do also abound to a considerable height in the air: they also range to vast distances; since locomotion is no labour to them, who are endowed with such wonderful powers of wing. Their powers seem to be in proportion to

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their levers; and their wings are longer in proportion than those of almost any other bird. When they mute, or ease themselves in flight, they raise their wings, and make them meet over their backs.

At some certain times, in the summer, I had remarked that swifts were hawking very low, for hours together, over pools and streams; and could not help inquiring into the object of their pursuit, that induced them to descend so much below their usual range. After some trouble I found that they were taking *phryganeæ*, *ephemeræ*, *libellulæ* (cadew-flies, may-flies, and dragon-flies), that were just emerged from their aurelia state. I then no longer wondered that they should be so willing to stoop for a prey that afforded them such plentiful and succulent nourishment.

They bring out their young about the middle or latter end of July; but as these never become perchers, nor, that ever I could discern, are fed on the wing by their dams, the coming forth of the young is not so notorious as in the other species.

On the 30th of last June I untiled the eaves of a house where many pairs build, and found in each nest only two squab, naked pulli. On the 8th of July I repeated the same inquiry, and found they had made very little progress towards a fledged state, but were still naked and helpless; from whence we may conclude, that birds whose way of life keeps them perpetually on the wing, would not be able to quit their nest till the end of the month. Swallows and martins that have numerous families, are continually feeding them every two or three minutes; while swifts, that have but two young to maintain, are much at their leisure, and do not attend on their nests for hours together.

Sometimes they pursue and strike at hawks that come in their way, but not with that vehemence and fury that swallows express on the same occasion. They are out all day long on wet days, feeding about, and disregarding still rain; from whence two things may be gathered,—first, that many insects abide high in the air, even in rain; and next, that the feathers of these birds must be well preened to resist so much wet. Windy, and particularly windy weather with heavy showers, they dislike, and on such days withdraw, and are scarcely ever seen.



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There is a circumstance respecting the colour of swifts which seems not to be unworthy our attention. When they arrive in the spring. they are all over of a glossy dark soot colour, except their chins, which are white; but, by being all day long in the sun and air, they become quite weather-beaten and bleached before they depart, and yet they return glossy again in the spring.* Now, if they pursue the sun into lower latitudes, as some suppose, in order to enjoy a perpetual summer, why do they not return bleached? Do they not, rather, perhaps, retire to rest for a season, and at that juncture moult and change their feathers, since all other birds are known to moult soon after the season of breeding?

Swifts are very anomalous in many particulars, dissenting from all their congeners, not only in the number of their young, but in breeding but once in a summer; whereas all the other British *hirundines* breed invariably twice. It is past all doubt that swifts can breed but once, since they withdraw in a short time after the flight of their young, and some time before their congeners bring out their second broods. We may here remark that, as swifts breed but once in a summer, and only two at a time, and the other *hirundines* twice, the latter, who lay from four to six eggs, increase, at an average, five times as fast as the former.

But in nothing are swifts more singular than in their early retreat. They retire, as to the main body of them, by the 10th of August, and sometimes a few days sooner; and every straggler invariably withdraws by the 20th: while their congeners, all of them, stay till the beginning of October, many of them all through that month, and some occasionally to the beginning of November. This early retreat is mysterious and wonderful, since that time is often the sweetest season in the year. But what is more extraordinary, they begin to retire still earlier in the more southerly parts of Andalusia, where they can be nowise influenced by any defect of heat, or, as one might suppose, defect of food. Are they regulated in their motions with us

* Mr. Yarrell says that the swift departs before its moult, and when its plumage is at the worst from wear and tear. Our summer visitors generally complete their moult before they leave us, but not the Hirundinidæ.

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by a failure of food, or by a propensity to moulting, or by a disposition to rest, after so rapid a life, or by what? This is one of those incidents in natural history that not only baffles our researches, but almost eludes our guesses!

These *hirundines* never perch on trees or roofs, and so never congregate with their congeners. They are fearless while haunting their nesting places, and are not to be scared with a gun, and are often beaten down with poles and cudgels as they stoop to go under the eaves. Swifts are much infested with those pests to the genus, called *hippoboscæ hirundinis*, and often wriggle and scratch themselves, in their flight, to get rid of that clinging annoyance.

Swifts are no songsters, and have only one harsh screaming note; yet there are ears to which it is not displeasing, from an agreeable association of ideas, since that note never occurs but in the most lovely summer weather.

They never settle on the ground but through accident, and when down can hardly rise, on account of the shortness of their legs and the length of their wings: neither can they walk, but only crawl; but they have a strong grasp with their feet, by which they cling to walls. Their bodies being flat, they can enter a very narrow crevice; and where they cannot pass on their bellies, they will turn up edgewise.

The particular formation of the foot discriminates the swift from all the British *hirundines*, and, indeed, from all other known birds, the *hirundo melba*, or great white-bellied swift of Gibraltar excepted; for it is so disposed as to carry "*omnes quatuor digitos anticos*," all its four toes forward: besides, the least toe, which should be the back toe, consists of one bone alone, and the other three only of two a-piece,—a construction most rare and particular, but nicely adapted to the purposes in which their feet are employed. This, and some peculiarities attending the nostrils and under mandible, have induced a discerning naturalist * to suppose that this species might constitute a genus *per se*.†

In London, a party of swifts frequents the Tower, playing and feeding over the river just below the bridge; others haunt some of the churches of the Borough next the fields,

* John Antony Scopoli, of Carniola, M.D.

† The genus *Cypselus* of Illiger is now generally adopted for this group. It is also the *Apus* of Belon.—W. J.



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but do not venture, like the house-martin, into the close, crowded part of the town.

The Swedes have bestowed a very pertinent name on this swallow, calling it *ring-swala*, from the perpetual rings, or circles, that it takes round the scene of its nidification.

Swifts feed on *coleoptera*, or small beetles with hard cases over their wings, as well as on the softer insects; but it does not appear how they can procure gravel to grind their food, as swallows do, since they never settle on the ground. Young ones, overrun with *hippoboscæ*, are sometimes found, under their nests, fallen to the ground, the number of vermin rendering their abode insupportable any longer. They frequent in this village several abject cottages; yet a succession still haunts the same unlikely roofs—a good proof this that the same birds return to the same spots. As they must stoop very low to get up under these humble eaves, cats lie in wait, and sometimes catch them on the wing.

On the 5th of July, 1775, I again untiled part of a roof over the nest of a swift. The dam sat in the nest; but so strongly was she affected by natural στοργὴ for her brood, which she supposed to be in danger, that, regardless of her own safety, she would not stir, but lay sullenly by them, permitting herself to be taken in hand. The squab young we brought down and placed on the grass-plot, where they tumbled about, and were as helpless as a new-born child. While we contemplated their naked bodies,* their unwieldy disproportioned abdomina, and their heads too heavy for their necks to support, we could not but wonder when we reflected that these shiftless beings, in a little more than a fortnight, would be able to dash through the air almost with the inconceivable swiftness of a meteor, and, perhaps, in their emigration, must traverse vast continents and oceans as distant as the equator. So soon does Nature advance small birds to their ἡλικία, or state of perfection; while the progressive growth of men and large quadrupeds is slow and tedious!

* We hope that Mr. White restored these helpless birds to their nest, and we suppose he did so, but it is not easy to see his object in either removing them, or in seeing their feeble state on a grass-plot.—Ed.

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## LETTER LXII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 1774.

DEAR SIR,—By means of a straight cottage chimney, I had an opportunity this summer of remarking, at my leisure, how swallows ascend and descend through the shaft; but my pleasure in contemplating the address with which this feat was performed, to a considerable depth in the chimney, was somewhat interrupted by apprehensions lest my eyes might undergo the same fate with those of Tobit.*

Perhaps it may be some amusement to you to hear at what times the different species of *hirundines* arrived this spring in three very distant counties of this kingdom. With us, the swallow was seen first on April the 4th; the swift on April the 24th; the bank-martin on April the 12th; and the house-martin not till April the 30th. At South Zele, Devonshire, swallows did not arrive till April the 25th; swifts, in plenty, on May the 1st; and house-martins not till the middle of May. At Blackburn, in Lancashire, swifts were seen April the 28th; swallows, April the 29th; house-martins, May the 1st. Do these different dates, in such distant districts, prove anything for or against migration?

A farmer near Weyhill fallows his land with two teams of asses, one of which works till noon, and the other in the afternoon. When these animals have done their work, they are penned all night, like sheep, on the fallow. In the winter, they are confined and foddered in the yard, and make plenty of dung.

Linnæus says, that hawks "*paciscuntur inducias cum avibus, quamdiu cuculus cuculat;*" but it appears to me that, during that period, many little birds are taken and destroyed by birds of prey, as may be seen by their feathers left in lanes and under hedges.

* Tobit, ii. 10.

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The missel-thrush is, while breeding, fierce and pugnacious, driving such birds as approach its nest, with great fury, to a distance. The Welsh call it *pen y llwyn*, the head or master of the coppice. He suffers no magpie, jay, or blackbird to enter the garden where he haunts, and is, for the time, a good guard to the new-sown legumens. In general, he is very successful in the defence of his family; but once I observed in my garden that several magpies came determined to storm the nest of a missel-thrush. The dams defended their mansion with great vigour, and fought resolutely; but numbers at last prevailed: they tore the nest to pieces, and swallowed the young alive.*

In the season of nidification, the wildest birds are comparatively tame. Thus the ring-dove breeds in my fields, though they are continually frequented; and the missel-thrush, though most shy and wild in the autum and winter, builds in my garden close to a walk where people are passing all day long.

Wall-fruits abound with me this year; but my grapes, that used to be forward and good, are at present backward beyond all precedent. And this is not the worst of the story; for the same ungenial weather, the same black, cold solstice, has injured the more necessary fruits of the earth, and discoloured and blighted our wheat. The crop of hops promises to be very large.

Frequent returns of deafness incommode me sadly, and half disqualify me for a naturalist; for, when those fits are upon me, I lose all the pleasing notices and little intimations

* When magpies have young, they will constantly attack the nests of other birds, and frequently the old birds, for food. Indeed there are few things on which these voracious birds will not feed. The following is extracted from a communication made by Mr. Wasey:—"As I was travelling yesterday between Andover and the railway station I noticed on the road a magpie struggling with some animal; on the approach of the coach it took flight, bearing away its prize to about sixty yards across a field, when it dropped it, and on my brother getting off to see what it was, he found it to be a full-grown red-wing. The magpie had pecked its eyes out to prevent its escape, and would soon have killed it, had we not so unceremoniously deprived him of his dinner. I believe it is not generally known that magpies ever prey upon living birds, especially a bird of such magnitude and weight as a fieldfare. No doubt it was hardly pressed by hunger and the inclemency of the season; but it is a fact worthy the attention of ornithologists, and if you think fit to take notice of the circumstance I will vouch for its truth."

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THE MISSEL THRUSH.

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arising from rural sounds; and May is to me as silent and mute, with respect to the notes of birds, &c., as August. My eyesight is, thank God, quick and good; but with respect to the other sense, I am at times disabled,

"And Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

## LETTER LXIII.

TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

It is matter of curious inquiry to trace out how those species of soft-billed birds that continue with us the winter through, subsist during the dead months.* The imbecility of birds seems not to be the only reason why they shun the rigour of our winters; for the robust wry-neck (so much resembling the hardy race of woodpeckers) migrates, while the feeble little golden-crowned wren, that shadow of a bird, braves our severest frosts, without availing himself of houses or villages, to which most of our winter birds crowd in distressful seasons, while he keeps aloof in fields and woods; but perhaps this may be the reason why they may often perish, and why they are almost as rare as any bird we know.†

* Nature has been very provident as to the subsistence of soft-billed birds during the winter months; vast numbers of insects hide themselves in interstices of trees, walls, &c., where birds seek for and feed on them. I constantly see birds clinging to old walls in search of food. The golden-breasted wren harbours much in winter amongst Scotch firs, where it not only finds shelter, but food, and often roosts in warm low sheds at night.—Ed.

† This species extends as far as the Orkney Isles. There is a constant migration of them, about the end of autumn, from the north of Europe, though we also have a great many that are stationary. Mr. Selby has recorded a very singular instance of migration, which occurred on the 24th and 25th October, 1822. After a severe gale, with thick fog, from the north-east, thousands of these birds were seen to arrive on the sea-shore and sand-banks of the Northumbrian coast, many of them so fatigued by the length of their flight, as to be unable to rise again from the ground; and great numbers were, in consequence, caught or destroyed. This flight must have been immense in quantity, as its extent was traced through the whole length of the coasts of Northumberland and Durham.—W. J.

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I have no reason to doubt but that the soft-billed birds which winter with us, subsist chiefly on insects in their aurelia state.* All the species of wagtails in severe weather haunt shallow streams, near their spring-heads, where they never freeze; and, by wading, pick out the aurelias of the genus of *phryganeæ*,† &c.

Hedge-sparrows frequent sinks and gutters in hard weather, where they pick up crumbs and other sweepings; and in mild weather they procure worms, which are stirring every month in the year, as any one may see that will only be at the trouble of taking a candle to a grass-plot on any mild winter's night. Red-breasts and wrens, in the winter, haunt outhouses, stables, and barns, where they find spiders and flies that have laid themselves up during the cold season. But the grand support of the soft-billed birds in winter, is that infinite profusion of aureliæ of the *lepidoptera ordo*, which is fastened to the twigs of trees and their trunks, to the pales and walls of gardens and buildings, and is found in every cranny and cleft of rock or rubbish, and even in the ground itself.

Every species of titmouse winters with us. They have what I call a kind of intermediate bill, between the hard and the soft, between the Linnæan genera of *fringilla* and *motacilla*. One species alone spends its whole time in the woods and fields, never retreating for succour, in the severest seasons, to houses and neighbourhoods,—and that is the delicate long-tailed titmouse, which is almost as minute as the golden-crowned wren; but the blue titmouse, or nun (*parus cæruleus*), the cole-mouse (*parus ater*), the great black-headed titmouse (*fringillago*), and the marsh titmouse (*parus palustris*), all resort, at times, to buildings, and in hard weather particularly. The great titmouse, driven by stress of weather, much frequents houses; and, in deep snows, I have seen this bird, while it hung with its back downwards (to

* It is an interesting fact, as showing the care of the great Creator for his creatures, that the berries of the misseltoe only ripen in the spring, when the hips, haws, the berries of hollies and ivy have generally disappeared. Thus in a prolonged winter many birds are kept from starving by means of the misseltoe, which I never knew them to feed on till about the end of February or early in March.—Ed.

† See Derham's *Physico-Theology*, p. 235.

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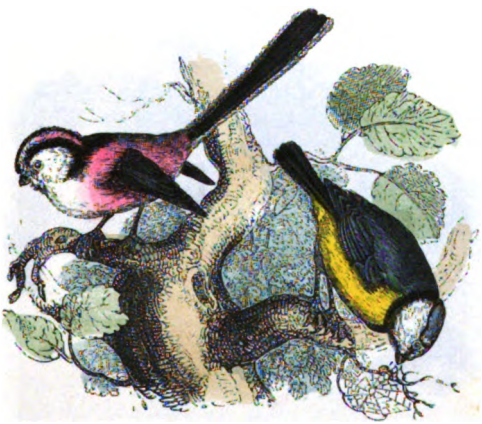

THE TITMOUSE.

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my no small delight and admiration), draw straws lengthwise from out the eaves of thatched houses, in order to pull out the flies that were concealed between them, and that in such numbers that they quite defaced the thatch, and gave it a ragged appearance.

The blue titmouse, or nun, is a great frequenter of houses, and a general devourer. Besides insects, it is very fond of flesh, for it frequently picks bones on dunghills. It is a vast admirer of suet, and haunts butchers' shops. When a boy, I have known twenty in a morning caught with snap mouse-traps, baited with tallow or suet. It will also pick holes in apples left on the ground, and be well entertained with the seeds on the head of a sunflower. The blue, marsh, and great titmice will, in very severe weather, carry away barley and oat-straws from the sides of ricks.

How the wheat-ear and whin-chat support themselves in winter, cannot be so easily ascertained, since they spend their time on wild heaths and warrens, the former, especially, where there are stone-quarries. Most probable it is, that their maintenance arises from the aurelia of the *lepidoptera ordo*, which furnish them with a plentiful table in the wilderness.

## LETTER LXIV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *March* 9, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—Some future faunist, a man of fortune, will, I hope, extend his visits to the kingdom of Ireland;* a new

* Ireland even still remains comparatively unexplored, except in its botanical productions. The *scolopax sabini*, a new species of snipe, was, I may say, accidentally discovered there, about three years since, of which specimens have been subsequently got, confirming the identity of the species; and we have every reason to expect some novelties, particularly in ichthyology and entomology. *Ledum palustre* and *papaver nudicale*, are among the late botanical discoveries.—W. J. Since this note was written, a "Natural History of Ireland" has been undertaken by William Thompson, Esq. The first two volumes, which are all yet published (1850), comprise the birds; and, as far as we can judge by this portion, the work will be a valuable addition to our literature.

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field, and a country little known to the naturalist. He will not, it is to be wished, undertake that tour unaccompanied by a botanist, because the mountains have scarcely been sufficiently examined; and the southerly counties of so mild an island may possibly afford some plants little to be expected within the British dominions. A person of a thinking turn of mind will draw many just remarks from the modern improvements of that country, both in arts and agriculture, where premiums obtained long before they were heard of with us. The manners of the wild natives, their superstitions, their prejudices, their sordid way of life, will extort from him many useful reflections. He should also take with him an able draughtsman; for he must, by no means, pass over the noble castles and seats, the extensive and picturesque lakes and water-falls, and the lofty, stupendous mountains, so little known, and so engaging to the imagination, when described and exhibited in a lively manner. Such a work would be well received.

As I have seen no modern map of Scotland, I cannot pretend to say how accurate or particular any such may be; but this I know, that the best old maps of that kingdom are very defective.

The great obvious defect that I have remarked in all maps of Scotland that have fallen in my way is, a want of a coloured line, or stroke, that shall exactly define the just limits of that district called the Highlands. Moreover, all the great avenues to that mountainous and romantic country want to be well distinguished. The military roads formed by General Wade are so great and Roman-like an undertaking, that they well merit attention. My old map, Moll's map, takes notice of Fort William, but could not mention the other forts that have been erected long since; therefore a good representation of the chain of forts should not be omitted.

The celebrated zig-zag up the Coryarich must not be passed over. Moll takes notice of Hamilton and Drumlanrig, and such capital houses; but a new survey, no doubt, should represent every seat and castle remarkable for any great event, or celebrated for its paintings, &c. Lord Breadalbane's seat and beautiful policy are too curious and extraordinary to be omitted.

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The seat of the Earl of Eglintoun, near Glasgow, is worthy of notice. The pine plantations of that nobleman are very grand and extensive indeed.

## LETTER LXV.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *June* 8, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—On September the 21st, 1741, being then on a visit, and intent on field diversions, I rose before daybreak: when I came into the enclosures, I found the stubbles and clover grounds matted all over with a thick coat of cobweb, in the meshes of which a copious and heavy dew hung so plentifully, that the whole face of the country seemed, as it were, covered with two or three setting-nets, drawn one over another. When the dogs attempted to hunt, their eyes were so blinded and hoodwinked that they could not proceed, but were obliged to lie down and scrape the incumbrances from their faces with their fore feet; so that, finding my sport interrupted, I returned home, musing in my mind on the oddness of the occurrence.

As the morning advanced, the sun became bright and warm, and the day turned out one of those most lovely ones which no season but the autumn produces,—cloudless, calm, serene, and worthy of the south of France itself.

About nine, an appearance very unusual began to demand our attention,—a shower of cobwebs falling from very elevated regions, and continuing, without any interruption, till the close of the day.

These webs are not single filmy threads, floating in the air in all directions, but perfect flakes or rags; some near an inch broad, and five or six long, which fell with a degree of velocity, that showed they were considerably heavier than the atmosphere.

On every side, as the observer turned his eyes, he might behold a continual succession of fresh flakes falling into his sight, and twinkling like stars, as they turned their sides towards the sun.

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How far this wonderful shower extended, would be difficult to say; but we know that it reached Bradley, Selborne, and Alresford, three places which lie in a sort of triangle, the shortest of whose sides is about eight miles in extent.

At the second of those places, there was a gentleman (for whose veracity and intelligent turn we have the greatest veneration) who observed it the moment he got abroad; but concluded that, as soon as he came upon the hill above his house, where he took his morning rides, he should be higher than this meteor, which he imagined might have been blown, like thistle-down, from the common above; but, to his great astonishment, when he rode to the most elevated part of the down, 300 feet above his fields, he found the webs, in appearance, still as much above him as before; still descending into sight in a constant succession, and twinkling in the sun, so as to draw the attention of the most incurious.*

Neither before nor after, was any such fall observed; but on this day the flakes hung in the trees and hedges so thick, that a diligent person sent out might have gathered baskets full.

The remark that I shall make on these cobweb-like appearances, called gossamer, is, that strange and superstitious as the notions about them were formerly, nobody in these days doubts but that they are the real production of small spiders, which swarm in the fields in fine weather in autumn, and have a power of shooting out webs from their tails, so as to render themselves buoyant, and lighter than air. But why these apterous insects should that day take such a wonderful aerial excursion, and why their webs should at once become so gross and material as to be considerably more weighty than air, and to descend with precipitation, is a matter beyond my skill. If I might be allowed to hazard a

* Dr. Lister, in his letters to Mr. Ray, says that on a day when the air was very full of Gossamer, he mounted to the top of the highest part of York minster, and found that the webs were still exceeding high above him.—See *Ray's Letters*, p. 87.

Chaucer, speaking of gossamer as a strange phenomenon, says:—

> "As sore some wonder at the cause of thunder,
> On ebb and flode, on *gosomer*, and mist;
> And on all thing, 'till that the cause is wist."

Dryden calls it, "The filmy gossamer."—Ed.

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supposition, I should imagine that those filmy threads, when first shot, might be entangled in the rising dew, and so drawn up, spiders and all, by a brisk evaporation, into the region where clouds are formed; and if the spiders have a power of coiling and thickening their webs in the air, as Dr. Lister says they have [see his *Letters* to Mr. Ray], then, when they were become heavier than the air, they must fall.

Every day in fine weather, in autumn chiefly, do I see those spiders shooting out their webs and mounting aloft: they will go off from your finger, if you will take them into your hand. Last summer one alighted on my book as I was reading in the parlour; and, running up to the top of the page, and shooting out a web, took his departure from thence. But what I most wondered at was, that it went off with considerable velocity in a place where no air was stirring; and I am sure that I did not assist it with my breath. So that these little crawlers seem to have, while mounting, some locomotive power without the use of wings, and to move in the air faster than the air itself.

## LETTER LXVI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Aug.* 15, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—There is a wonderful spirit of sociality in the brute creation, independent of sexual attachment: the congregation of gregarious birds in the winter is a remarkable instance.

Many horses, though quiet with company, will not stay one minute in a field by themselves: the strongest fences cannot restrain them. My neighbour's horse will not only not stay by himself abroad, but he will not bear to be left alone in a strange stable, without discovering the utmost impatience, and endeavouring to break the rack and manger with his fore feet. He has been known to leap out at a stable-window, through which dung was thrown, after company; and yet, in other respects, is remarkably quiet. Oxen and

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cows will not fatten by themselves; but will neglect the finest pasture that is not recommended by society. It would be needless to instance in sheep, which constantly flock together.

But this propensity seems not to be confined to animals of the same species; for we know a doe, still alive, that was brought up from a little fawn with a dairy of cows; with them it goes a-field, and with them it returns to the yard. The dogs of the house take no notice of this deer, being used to her; but, if strange dogs come by, a chase ensues; while the master smiles to see his favourite securely leading her pursuers over hedge, or gate, or stile, till she returns to the cows, who, with fierce lowings, and menacing horns, drive the assailants quite out of the pasture.

Even great disparity of kind and size does not always prevent social advances and mutual fellowship. For a very intelligent and observant person has assured me, that in the former part of his life, keeping but one horse, he happened also on a time to have but one solitary hen.* These two incongruous animals spent much of their time together, in a lonely orchard, where they saw no creature but each other. By degrees, an apparent regard began to take between these two sequestered individuals. The fowl would approach the quadruped with notes of complacency, rubbing herself gently against his legs; while the horse would look down with satisfaction, and move with the greatest caution and circumspection, lest he should trample on his diminutive companion. Thus, by mutual good offices, each seemed to console the vacant hours of the other: so that Milton, when he puts the following sentiment in the mouth of Adam, seems to be somewhat mistaken:—

> "Much less can bird with beast, or fish with fowl,
> So well converse, nor with the ox the ape."

* A gentleman in Scotland had a cock golden pheasant sent him, which he confined in a pen with a solitary chicken which he happened to have. The birds formed a great affection for each other, which they showed in a variety of ways. The pheasant, however, died, and was immediately stuffed, and the chicken turned loose. It appeared to be miserable after the death of its companion, and happening to see it after the pheasant had been stuffed, it drooped its wings after vainly attempting to get at it, and soon afterwards died.—Ed.

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## LETTER LXVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Oct.* 2, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—We have two gangs, or hordes of gipsies, which infest the south and west of England, and come round in their circuit two or three times in the year. One of these tribes calls itself by the noble name of Stanley,* of which I have nothing particular to say; but the other is distinguished by an appellative somewhat remarkable. As far as their harsh gibberish can be understood, they seem to say that the name of their clan is Curleople. Now the termination of this word is apparently Grecian; and, as Mezeray and the gravest historians all agree that these vagrants did certainly migrate from Egypt and the East, two or three centuries ago,† and so spread by degrees over Europe, may not this family name, a little corrupted, be the very name they brought with them from the Levant? It would be matter of some curiosity could one meet with an intelligent person among them, to inquire whether, in their jargon, they still retained any Greek words: the Greek radicals will appear in hand, foot, head, water, earth, &c. It is possible that, amidst their cant and corrupted dialect, many mutilated remains of their native language might still be discovered.

With regard to these peculiar people, the gipsies, one thing is very remarkable, and especially as they came from a warmer climate, and that is, that while other beggars lodge in barns, stables, and cow-houses, these sturdy savages seem to pride themselves in braving the severities of winter, and in living *sub dio* the whole year round. Last September was as wet a month as ever was known; and yet, during those deluges, did a young gipsy girl lie in the midst of one of our

* I remember asking a gipsy of the name of Stanley whether she was of the Derby family. The woman was very indignant at the question, and stood up for the antiquity of her family, as infinitely more ancient than that of Derby.—ED.

† See BORROW's *Gipsies*

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hop-gardens, on the cold ground,* with nothing over her but a piece of a blanket, extended on a few hazel-rods bent hoop fashion, and stuck into the earth at each end, in circumstances too trying for a cow in the same condition; yet within this garden there was a large hop-kiln, into the chambers of which she might have retired, had she thought shelter an object worthy her attention.

Europe itself, it seems, cannot set bounds to the rovings of these vagabonds; for Mr. Bell, in his return from Peking, met a gang of these people on the confines of Tartary, who were endeavouring to penetrate those deserts, and try their fortune in China.†

Gipsies are called in French, *Bohemians;* in Italian and modern Greek, *Zingani.*

## LETTER LXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

" Hic —— tædæ pingues, hic plurimus ignis
Semper, et assiduâ postes fuligine nigri."

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 1, 1775.

I SHALL make no apology for troubling you with the detail of a very simple piece of domestic economy, being satisfied that you think nothing beneath your attention that tends to utility. The matter alluded to is the use of rushes instead of candles, which I am well aware prevails in many districts besides this; but as I know there are countries also where it does not obtain, and as I have considered the sub-

* My kind old friend the late Dr. Fergusson, while residing at Windsor was sent for to see a young gipsy girl who was very ill with the small-pox. She was lying on the ground in the sort of tent Mr. White has described. Dr. Fergusson wanted to have her removed to a house, but nothing could prevail on the woman to leave her quarters. She eventually recovered, and for years afterwards he received grateful visits from this woman and some of her tribe to thank him for his kindness.—ED.

† See BELL's *Travels in China.*

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ject with some degree of exactness, I shall proceed in my humble story, and leave you to judge of the expediency.

The proper species of rush for this purpose seems to be the *juncus conglomeratus*, or common soft rush, which is to be found in most moist pastures, by the sides of streams, and under hedges. These rushes are in the best condition in the height of summer; but may be gathered, so as to serve the purpose well, quite on to autumn. It would be needless to add, that the largest and longest are best. Decayed labourers, women, and children, make it their business to procure and prepare them. As soon as they are cut, they must be flung into water and kept there, for otherwise they will dry and shrink, and the peel will not run. At first, a person would find it no easy matter to divest a rush of its peel, or rind, so as to leave one regular, narrow, even rib from top to bottom, that may support the pith; but this, like other feats, soon becomes familiar, even to children; and we have seen an old woman, stone blind, performing this business with great dispatch, and seldom failing to strip them with the nicest regularity. When these *junci* are thus far prepared, they must lie out on the grass to be bleached, and take the dew for some nights, and afterwards be dried in the sun.

Some address is required in dipping these rushes in the scalding fat or grease; but this knack also is to be attained by practice. The careful wife of an industrious Hampshire labourer obtains all her fat for nothing, for she saves the scummings of her bacon-pot for this use; and if the grease abounds with salt, she causes the salt to precipitate to the bottom, by setting the scummings over a warm oven. Where hogs are not much in use, and especially by the sea-side, the coarser animal oils will come very cheap. A pound of common grease may be procured for fourpence; and about six pounds of grease will dip a pound of rushes; and one pound of rushes may be bought for one shilling; so that a pound of rushes, medicated and ready for use, will cost three shillings. If men that keep bees will mix a little wax with the grease, it will give it a consistency, and render it more cleanly, and make the rushes burn longer: mutton-suet would have the same effect.

A good rush, which measured in length two feet four inches and a half, being minuted, burnt only three minutes



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short of an hour; and a rush of still greater length has been known to burn one hour and a quarter.

These rushes give a good clear light. Watch-lights (coated with tallow), it is true, shed a dismal one—"darkness visible;" but then the wicks of those have two ribs of the rind, or peel, to support the pith, while the wick of the dipped rush has but one. The two ribs are intended to impede the progress of the flame, and make the candle last.

In a pound of dry rushes, avoirdupois, which I caused to be weighed and numbered, we found upwards of one thousand six hundred individuals. Now, suppose each of these burns one with another only half an hour, then a poor man will purchase eight hundred hours of light, a time exceeding thirty-three entire days, for three shillings. According to this account, each rush, before dipping, cost one thirty-third of a farthing, and one eleventh afterwards. Thus a poor family will enjoy five and a half hours of comfortable light for a farthing. An experienced old housekeeper assures me, that one pound and a half of rushes completely supplies his family the year round, since working people burn no candle in the long days, because they rise and go to bed by daylight.

Little farmers use rushes much in the short days, both morning and evening, in the dairy and kitchen; but the very poor, who are always the worst economists, and therefore must continue very poor, buy a halfpenny candle every evening, which in their blowing open rooms, does not burn much more than two hours. Thus have they only two hours' light for their money, instead of eleven.

While on the subject of rural economy, it may not be improper to mention a pretty implement of housewifery that we have seen no where else; that is, little neat besoms which our foresters make from the stalks of the *polytricum commune*, or great golden maiden-hair, which they call silk-wood, and find plenty in the bogs.* When this moss is well combed and dressed, and divested of its outer skin, it becomes of a beautiful bright chestnut colour; and being soft and pliant,

* Very commonly used in Scotland for the same purposes, and also for mats, or rugs, which are plaited together, leaving the tops sticking out for two or three inches, and thus making both a warm and useful household appendage.—W. J.

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is very proper for the dusting of beds, curtains, carpets, hangings, &c. If these besoms were known to the brush-makers in town, it is probable they might come much in use for the purpose above mentioned.*

## LETTER LXIX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Dec.* 12, 1775.

DEAR SIR,—We had in this village, more than twenty years ago, an idiot boy, whom I well remember, who, from a child, showed a strong propensity to bees; they were his food, his amusement, his sole object. And as people of this cast have seldom more than one point in view, so this lad exerted all his few faculties on this one pursuit. In the winter he dozed away his time, within his father's house, by the fire-side, in a kind of torpid state, seldom departing from the chimney corner; but in the summer he was all alert, and in quest of his game in the fields, and on sunny banks. Honey-bees, humble-bees, and wasps, were his prey wherever he found them: he had no apprehensions from their stings, but would seize them with naked hands, and at once disarm them of their weapons, and suck their bodies for the sake of their honey-bags. Sometimes he would fill his bosom, between his shirt and his skin, with a number of these captives: and sometimes would confine them in bottles. He was a very *merops apiaster*, or bee-bird; and very injurious to men that kept bees; for he would slide into their bee-gardens, and sitting down before the stools, would rap with his finger on the hives, and so take the bees as they came out. He has been known to overturn hives for the sake of honey, of which he was passionately fond. Where metheglin was making, he would linger round the tubs and vessels, begging a draught of what he called bee-wine. As

* A besom of this sort is to be seen in Sir Ashton Lever's museum.



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he ran about, he used to make a humming noise with his lips, resembling the buzzing of bees. This lad was lean and sallow, and of a cadaverous complexion; and, except in his favourite pursuit, in which he was wonderfully adroit, discovered no manner of understanding. Had his capacity been better, and directed to the same object, he had perhaps abated much of our wonder at the feats of a more modern exhibiter of bees; and we may justly say of him now,

> "Thou,
> Had thy presiding star propitious shone,
> Shouldst Wildman be."*

When a tall youth, he was removed from hence to a distant village, where he died, as I understand, before he arrived at manhood.

## LETTER LXX.

### TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 8, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—It is the hardest thing in the world to shake off superstitious prejudices: they are sucked in as it were with our mother's milk; and growing up with us at a time when they take the fastest hold, and make the most lasting impressions, become so interwoven into our very constitutions, that the strongest good sense is required to disengage ourselves from them. No wonder, therefore, that the lower people retain them their whole lives through, since their minds are not invigorated by a liberal education, and therefore not enabled to make any efforts adequate to the occasion.

Such a preamble seems to be necessary before we enter on the superstitions of this district, lest we should be sus-

* It may not be generally known that Wildman's celebrated work on bees was written by Dr. Templeman, Secretary to the Society of Arts.—ED.

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pected of exaggeration in a recital of practices too gross for this enlightened age.

But the people of Tring, in Hertfordshire, would do well to remember, that no longer ago than the year 1751, and within twenty miles of the capital, they seized on two superannuated wretches, crazed with age, and overwhelmed with infirmities, on a suspicion of witchcraft; and, by trying experiments, drowned them in a horse-pond.

In a farm-yard, near the middle of this village, stands at this day, a row of pollard-ashes, which, by the seams and long cicatrices down their sides, manifestly show that in former times they have been cleft asunder. These trees, when young and flexible, were severed and held open by wedges, while ruptured children stripped naked were pushed through the apertures, under a persuasion that by such a process, the poor babes would be cured of their infirmity. As soon as the operation was over, the tree in the suffering part was plastered with loam, and carefully swathed up. If the parts coalesced and soldered together, as usually fell out where the feat was performed with any adroitness at all, the party was cured; but where the cleft continued to gape, the operation, it was supposed, would prove ineffectual. Having occasion to enlarge my garden not long since, I cut down two or three such trees, one of which did not grow together.

We have several persons now living in the village, who, in their childhood, were supposed to be healed by this superstitious ceremony, derived down, perhaps, from our Saxon ancestors, who practised it before their conversion to Christianity.*

At the south corner of the Plestor, or area, near the

* The popular superstitions extend even to insects. A woman in my neighbourhood told me that she had lost all her hives of bees, because she had not tapped at each of the hives when her poor dear husband died, to announce his death to the bees. It is also a common custom to attach a small piece of black cloth or crape in a split stick and to fasten it on a hive when the owner has died. The author of a *Tour in Brittany* says, that, "if bees are kept at a house where a marriage feast is celebrated, care is always taken to dress up their hives in red, which is done by placing upon them pieces of scarlet cloth; the Bretons imagining that the bees would forsake their dwellings if they were not made to participate in the rejoicings of their owners. In the like manner they are all put into mourning when a death occurs in the family."—Ed.

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church, there stood, about twenty years ago, a very old, grotesque, hollow pollard-ash, which for ages had been looked on with no small veneration as a shrew-ash. Now, a shrew-ash is an ash whose twigs or branches, when gently applied to the limbs of cattle, will immediately relieve the pains which a beast suffers from the running of a shrew-mouse over the part affected;* for it is supposed that a shrew-mouse is of so baneful and deleterious a nature, that wherever it creeps over a beast, be it horse, cow, or sheep, the suffering animal is afflicted with cruel anguish, and threatened with the loss of the use of the limb. Against this accident, to which they were continually liable, our provident forefathers always kept a shrew-ash at hand, which, when once medicated, would maintain its virtue for ever. A shrew-ash was made thus:†—Into the body of the tree a deep hole was bored with an auger, and a poor devoted shrew-mouse was thrust in alive, and plugged in, no doubt, with several quaint incantations, long since forgotten. As the ceremonies necessary for such a consecration are no longer understood, all succession is at an end, and no such tree is known to exist in the manor or hundred.

As to that on the Plestor,

"The late vicar stubb'd and burnt it,"

when he was way-warden, regardless of the remonstrances of the by-standers, who interceded in vain for its preservation, urging its power and efficacy, and alleging that it had been

"Religione patrum multos servata per annos."

With reverential awe preserved for years.

* They were supposed, also, to be particularly injurious to horses. "When a horse in the fields happened to be suddenly seized with anything like a numbness in his legs, he was immediately judged by the old persons to be either planet-struck, or shrew-struck. The mode of cure which they prescribed, and which they considered in all cases as infallible, was to drag the animal through a piece of bramble that grew at both ends."—BINGLEY's *Memoirs of British Quadrupeds*.—Cats will kill shrews, but will not eat them.—W. J.

† For a similar practice, see PLOT's *Staffordshire*.

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## LETTER LXXI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 7, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—In heavy fogs, on elevated situations especially, trees are perfect alembics; and no one that has not attended to such matters can imagine how much water one tree will distil in a night's time, by condensing the vapour, which trickles down the twigs and boughs, so as to make the ground below quite in a float. In Newton-lane, in October, 1775, on a misty day, a particular oak in leaf dropped so fast that the cart-way stood in puddles, and the ruts ran with water, though the ground in general was dusty.

In some of our smaller islands in the West Indies, if I mistake not, there are no springs or rivers; but the people are supplied with that necessary element, water, merely by the dripping of some large tall trees, which, standing in the bosom of a mountain, keep their heads constantly enveloped with fogs and clouds, from which they dispense their kindly, never-ceasing moisture; and so render those districts habitable by condensation alone.

Trees in leaf have such a vast proportion more of surface than those that are naked, that, in theory, their condensations should greatly exceed those that are stripped of their leaves; but, as the former imbibe also a great quantity of moisture, it is difficult to say which drip most: but this I know, that deciduous trees, that are entwined with much ivy, seem to distil the greatest quantity. Ivy leaves are smooth, and thick, and cold, and therefore condense very fast; and besides, evergreens imbibe very little.* These

* It has been supposed that trees, by condensing the moisture of the air in foggy weather, materially affect the climate, and that thickly wooded countries must necessarily be colder and more humid than naked savannahs. There can be little doubt that such is the case. When some North American Indians made the discovery that the wild cattle of the prairies got amidst the smoke of a burning forest to drive away the flies, they set fire to large tracts

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facts may furnish the intelligent with hints concerning what sorts of trees they should plant round small ponds that they would wish to be perennial; and show them how advantageous some trees are in preference to others.

Trees perspire profusely, condense largely, and check evaporation so much, that woods are always moist; no wonder, therefore, that they contribute much to pools and streams.

That trees are great promoters of lakes and rivers appears from a well-known fact in North America; for, since the woods and forests have been grubbed and cleared, all bodies of water are much diminished; so that some streams that were very considerable a century ago will not now drive a common mill.* Besides, most woodlands, forests, and chases, with us, abound with pools and morasses, no doubt for the reason given above.

To a thinking mind, few phenomena are more strange than the state of little ponds on the summits of chalk hills, many of which are never dry in the most trying droughts of summer;—on chalk hills, I say, because in many rocky and gravelly soils springs usually break out pretty high on the sides of elevated grounds and mountains; but no person acquainted with chalky districts will allow that they ever saw springs in such a soil but in valleys and bottoms, since the waters of so pervious a stratum as chalk all lie on one dead level, as well-diggers have assured me again and again.

Now, we have many such little round ponds in this district; and one in particular on our sheep-down, three hundred feet above my house, which, though never above three feet deep in the middle, and not more than thirty feet in diameter, and containing perhaps not more than two or three hundred hogsheads of water, yet never is known to fail, though it affords drink for three hundred or four hundred sheep, and for at least twenty head of large cattle besides. This pond, it is true, is overhung with two moderate beeches, that, doubtless, at times afford it much supply; but then we have others as small, that, without the aid of trees, and in

in order the more readily to destroy the buffaloes. The consequence was that light and air penetrated the forests, the snow melted rapidly, and it has materially altered the climate of the vast regions of North America. See Sir Francis Head's *Emigrant*.—Ed.

* Vide Kalm's *Travels to North America*.

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spite of evaporation from sun and wind, and perpetual consumption by cattle, yet constantly maintain a moderate share of water, without overflowing in the wettest seasons, as they would do if supplied by springs. By my journal of May, 1775, it appears that "the small and even considerable ponds on the vales are now dried up, while the small ponds on the very tops of hills are but little affected." Can this difference be accounted for from evaporation alone, which certainly is more prevalent in bottoms? or rather have not those elevated pools some unnoticed recruits, which in the night-time counterbalance the waste of the day, without which the cattle alone must soon exhaust them? And here it will be necessary to enter more minutely into the cause. Dr. Hales, in his *Vegetable Statics*, advances, from experiment, that "the moister the earth is, the more dew falls on it in a night; and more than a double quantity of dew falls on an equal surface of moist earth." Hence we see that water, by its coolness, is enabled to assimilate to itself a large quantity of moisture nightly by condensation; and that the air, when loaded with fogs and vapours, and even with copious dews, can alone advance a considerable and never-failing resource. Persons that are much abroad, and travel early and late, such as shepherds, fishermen, &c., can tell what prodigious fogs prevail in the night on elevated downs, even in the hottest parts of summer; and how much the surfaces of things are drenched by those swimming vapours, though to the senses all the while little moisture seems to fall.

## LETTER LXXII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *April* 3, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—Monsieur Herissant, a French anatomist, seems persuaded that he has discovered the reason why cuckoos * do not hatch their own eggs; the impediment, he supposes,

* The cuckoo is the largest of insectivorous birds, and must require a great

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arises from the internal structure of their parts, which incapacitates them for incubation. According to this gentleman, the crop, or craw, of a cuckoo, does not lie before the sternum at the bottom of the neck, as in the *gallinæ*, *columbæ*, &c., but immediately behind it, on and over the bowels, so as to make a large protuberance in the belly.*

Induced by this assertion, we procured a cuckoo; and, cutting open the breast-bone, and exposing the intestines to sight, found the crop lying as mentioned above. This stomach was large and round, and stuffed hard, like a pincushion, with food, which, upon nice examination, we found to consist of various insects, such as small scarabs, spiders, and dragon-flies—the last of which we have seen cuckoos catching on the wing, as they were just emerging out of the aurelia state. Among this farrago also were to be seen maggots, and many seeds which belonged either to gooseberries, currants, cranberries, or some such fruit; so that these birds apparently subsist on insects and fruits; nor was there the least appearance of bones, feathers, or fur, to support the idle notion of their being birds of prey.†

The sternum in this bird seemed to us to be remarkably short, between which and the anus lay the crop, or craw, and immediately behind that the bowels, against the backbone.

It must be allowed, as this anatomist observes, that the crop,‡ placed just below the bowels, must, especially when full, be in a very uneasy situation during the business of

quantity of food; to obtain which they must, like the swallow, be in constant search of it. If they sat on their eggs, therefore, how is this necessary supply to be obtained? The eggs would be chilled while they were on the wing.—Ed.

* *Histoire de l'Academie Royale*, 1752.

† When these birds have fed much on some of the large hairy caterpillars so common on the northern muirs, the stomach becomes filled and coated with the short hairs, which may have assisted in raising the opinion that they feed on small animals.—W. J.

‡ "The cuckoo," Mr. Owen says, "has no true crop, and the situation of its proventiculus does not differ from that of other scansorial birds; the œsophagus descends along the posterior or dorsal part of the thorax, inclining to the side, and, when opposite to the lower margin of the left lung, it begins to expand into the glandular cavity or proventiculus. The gizzard, which is neither large or strong, is in immediate contact with the abdominal parietes, not separated from them by an intervening stratum of intestines;

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incubation; yet the test will be, to examine whether birds that are actually known to sit for certain, are not formed in a similar manner. This inquiry I proposed to myself to make with a fern-owl, or goat-sucker, as soon as opportunity offered; because, if their information proves the same, the reason for incapacity in the cuckoo will be allowed to have been taken up somewhat hastily.

Not long after, a fern-owl was procured, which, from its habits and shape, we suspected might resemble the cuckoo in its internal construction. Nor were our suspicions ill grounded; for, upon the dissection, the crop, or craw, also lay behind the sternum, immediately on the viscera, between them and the skin of the belly. It was bulky, and stuffed hard with large *phalænæ*, moths of several sorts, and their eggs, which, no doubt, had been forced out of these insects by the action of swallowing.

Now, as it appears that this bird, which is so well known to practise incubation, is formed in a similar manner with cuckoos, Monsieur Herissant's conjecture that cuckoos are incapable of incubation from the disposition of their intestines, seems to fall to the ground; and we are still at a loss for the cause of that strange and singular peculiarity in the instance of the *cuculus canorus*.

We found the case to be the same with the ring-tail hawk, in respect to formation; and, as far as I can recollect, with the swift; and probably it is so with many more sorts of birds that are not granivorous.

## LETTER LXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *April* 29, 1776.

DEAR SIR,—On August the 4th, 1775, we surprised a large viper, which seemed very heavy and bloated, as it lay in the grass, basking in the sun. When we came to cut it up, we found that the abdomen was crowded with young, fifteen in

but this position cannot be supposed to interfere with the power of incubation, since it occurs also in other birds that do incubate, as the owl and *Caryocatacles*."

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number; the shortest of which measured full seven inches, and were about the size of full-grown earth-worms. This little fry issued into the world with the true viper spirit about them, showing great alertness as soon as disengaged from the belly of the dam: they twisted and wriggled about, and set themselves up, and gaped very wide when touched with a stick, showing manifest tokens of menace and defiance, though as yet they had no manner of fangs that we could find even with the help of our glasses.

To a thinking mind, nothing is more wonderful than that early instinct which impresses young animals with the notion of the situation of their natural weapons, and of using them properly in their own defence, even before those weapons subsist or are formed. Thus a young cock will spar at his adversary before his spurs are grown, and a calf or lamb will push with their heads before their horns are sprouted. In the same manner did these young adders attempt to bite before their fangs were in being. The dam, however, was furnished with very formidable ones, which we lifted up (for they fold down when not used), and cut them off with the point of our scissors.

There was little room to suppose that this brood had ever been in the open air before,* and that they were taken in for refuge, at the mouth of the dam, when she perceived that danger was approaching; because then, probably, we should have found them somewhere in the neck, and not in the abdomen.

* The very circumstance which Mr. White mentions, of the young vipers being fully seven inches in length, proves that they had been in the open air before, as they have been known to leave the stomach of the dam when they have been from one to two inches in length. From various facts communicated to me by viper-catchers and others, I can have no doubt but that the young vipers, when alarmed, take refuge in the inside of the parent, who extends her mouth for the purpose.—Ed.

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## LETTER LXXIV.

### TO THE SAME.

CASTRATION has a strange effect: it emasculates both man, beast, and bird, and brings them to a near resemblance of the other sex. Thus, eunuchs have smooth unmuscular arms, thighs, and legs; and broad hips, and beardless chins, and squeaking voices. Gelt stags and bucks have hornless heads,* like hinds and does. Thus wethers have small horns, like ewes; and oxen large bent horns, and hoarse voices when they low, like cows: for bulls have short straight horns; and though they mutter and grumble in a deep tremendous tone, yet they low in a shrill high key. Capons have small combs and gills, and look pallid about the head like pullets; they also walk without any parade, and hover chickens like hens. Barrow-hogs have also small tusks, like sows.

Thus far it is plain, that the deprivation of masculine vigour puts a stop to the growth of those parts or appendages that are looked upon as its insignia. But the ingenious Mr. Lisle, in his book on husbandry, carries it much further; for he says that the loss of those insignia alone has sometimes a strange effect on the ability itself. He had a boar so fierce and venereous that, to prevent mischief, orders were given for his tusks to be broken off. No sooner had the beast suffered this injury than his powers forsook him, and he neglected those females to whom before he was passionately attached, and from whom no fences could restrain him.†

* This is not the case if the spermatic cord has been separated. It equally emasculates the animal, but the horns remain as before the operation.—ED.

† I apprehend this remark to be erroneous, as I have known the tusks of many dangerous boars sawn off, for safety, without any such consequence following. I have seen them, however, no longer able to command the monopoly of the sows, as the young boars were no longer afraid of them. —MR. SELLS.

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## LETTER LXXV.

### TO THE SAME.

THE natural term of a hog's life is little known, and the reason is plain—because it is neither profitable nor convenient to keep that turbulent animal to the full extent of its time; however, my neighbour, a man of substance, who had no occasion to study every little advantage to a nicety, kept a half-bed Bantam sow, who was as thick as she was long, and whose belly swept on the ground, till she was advanced to her seventeenth year; at which period, she showed some tokens of age by the decay of her teeth, and the decline of her fertility.

For about ten years, this prolific mother produced two litters in the year, of about ten at a time, and once above twenty at a litter; but, as there were near double the number of pigs to that of teats, many died. From long experience in the world, this female was grown very sagacious and artful. When she found occasion to converse with a boar, she used to open all the intervening gates, and march, by herself, up to a distant farm where one was kept; and, when her purpose was served, would return by the same means. At the age of about fifteen, her litters began to be reduced to four or five; and such a litter she exhibited when in her fatting-pen. She proved, when fat, good bacon, juicy and tender; the rind, or sward, was remarkably thin. At a moderate computation, she was allowed to have been the fruitful parent of three hundred pigs—a prodigious instance of fecundity in so large a quadruped! She was killed in spring, 1775.

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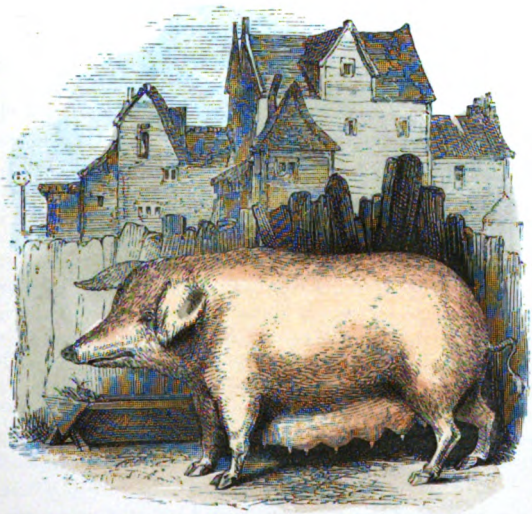

THE COMMON OR DOMESTIC HOG. (*Sus scrofa.*)

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## LETTER LXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *May* 9, 1776.

"——— Admôrunt ubera tigres."

DEAR SIR,—We have remarked in a former letter how much incongruous animals, in a lonely state, may be attached to each other from a spirit of sociality; in this, it may not be amiss to recount a different motive, which has been known to create as strange a fondness.

My friend had a little helpless leveret brought to him, which the servants fed with milk in a spoon, and about the same time, his cat kittened, and the young were dispatched and buried. The hare was soon lost, and supposed to be gone the way of most foundlings, to be killed by some dog or cat. However, in about a fortnight, as the master was sitting in his garden, in the dusk of the evening, he observed his cat, with tail erect, trotting towards him, and calling with little short inward notes of complacency, such as they use towards their kittens, and something gamboling after, which proved to be the leveret that the cat had supported with her milk, and continued to support with great affection.*

* About two years since, at a cottar's house in Annandale, Dumfries-shire, a litter of pigs by some accident lost their mother; at the same time a pointer bitch happened to pup, and the puppies suffering the lot common to most such, their place was supplied by the pigs, which were well and affectionately nursed by their foster-parent.—W. J., 1829.

It has been most beautifully and providentially ordered that the process of suckling their young is as pleasurable to the parent animal, as it is essential to the support of the infant progeny. The mammæ of animals become painful when over distended with milk. Drawing off that fluid removes positive uneasiness, and affords positive pleasure. The nipple, previously soft and flaccid, becomes, on the young beginning to suck, enlarged, firm, and erect, and the flowing of the milk is accompanied by an exquisitely pleasing sensation. The nipple is highly organised, and becomes enlarged on application of slight friction, and by a kind of spasmodic action will sometimes throw out the

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Thus was a graminivorous animal nurtured by a carnivorous and predaceous one!

Why so cruel and sanguinary a beast as a cat, of the ferocious genus of *felis*, the *murium leo*, "the lion of mice," as Linnæus calls it, should be affected with any tenderness towards an animal which is its natural prey, is not so easy to determine.

This strange affection probably was occasioned by that desiderium, those tender maternal feelings, which the loss of her kittens had awakened in her breast; and by the complacency and ease she derived to herself from procuring her teats to be drawn, which were too much distended with milk; till, from habit, she became as much delighted with this foundling, as if it had been her real offspring.

This incident is no bad solution of that strange circumstance which grave historians, as well as the poets, assert, of exposed children being sometimes nurtured by female wild beasts that probably had lost their young. For it is not one whit more marvellous that Romulus and Remus, in their infant state, should be nursed by a she-wolf, than that a poor little sucking leveret should be fostered and cherished by a bloody grimalkin.

## LETTER LXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *May* 20, 1777.

DEAR SIR,—Lands that are subject to frequent inundations are always poor; and, probably, the reason may be, because the worms are drowned. The most insignificant insects and reptiles are of much more consequence, and have much more influence in the economy of Nature, than the incurious are aware of; and are mighty in their effect, from their minuteness, which renders them less an object of attention; and

milk in jets. I once saw a young panther suckled by a bitch, and last year I had a kitten who was often to be seen sucking a spaniel bitch. Many other instances might be brought forward.—ED.

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from their numbers and fecundity. Earth-worms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of Nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm.* For to say nothing of half the birds, and some quadrupeds, which are almost entirely supported by them, worms seem to be the great promoters of vegetation, which would proceed but lamely without them, by boring, perforating, and loosening the soil, and rendering it pervious to rains and the fibres of plants, by drawing straws and stalks of leaves into it; and, most of all, by throwing up such infinite numbers of lumps of earth, called worm-casts, which being their excrement, is a fine manure for grain and grass.† Worms pro-

* The following interesting account of the earth-worm was communicated to me by an intelligent correspondent:—"On Tuesday night, February 3rd, 1836, we had the deepest snow which has fallen for the winter; though not to be compared with what fell in the west, and in other parts of England. As on other occasions we observed the blackbirds and thrushes drawing up to the house, and cowering as if to give notice of a coming storm. On the following morning, on looking out of window we noticed an unusual appearance. At first sight it seemed as if the unsullied snow had many little twigs or sticks scattered all over its surface. On closer inspection it proved that numbers of large earth-worms were writhing on the face of the snow, and they furnished a rich repast for the birds to breakfast on, so that some of our usual visitors forsook their crumbs under the verandah. What circumstances can have induced these earth-worms to leave their holes and to be found in such an uncongenial station, we cannot imagine. Perhaps, as the evening was mild and moist they may have sallied forth, and the snow, coming suddenly, may have prevented their finding their way to their homes. But why mount to the surface and expose themselves to certain death! The recollection of this phenomenon is still fresh in our memories, and when I recalled it to a sister who was with us, she spoke of it with disgust, as like a layer of flesh upon the snow. But I have never had the causes clearly explained, nor am I sufficiently acquainted with the habits of earth-worms to do so. As far as I have observed they never leave their holes, unless something is the matter. You have probably observed on a mild moist evening, when they bask on the turf, and dart into their holes with infinite vivacity, that they always retain possession at one extremity. I have found that if I have snatched one from his hold, I could not restore it again. The poor creature was quite lost, and could neither find his way home himself or be replaced in it by me. Am I right in supposing that they never voluntarily leave their holes? Or do they wander forth in the depth of the night, and in the case described above, were they excluded by the sudden fall of snow and change of temperature?"—Ed.

† The runs, also, made by worms in the earth, enables the water to percolate to the roots of wheat and other grain. Worm-casts, when collected are an excellent soil for many flowers, such as carnations, pinks, &c.—Ed.



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bably provide new soils for hills and slopes where the rain washes the earth away; and they affect slopes, probably, to avoid being flooded. Gardeners and farmers express their detestation of worms;* the former, because they render their walks unsightly, and make them much work: and the latter, because, as they think, worms eat their green corn. But these men would find, that the earth without worms would soon become cold, hard-bound, and void of fermentation; and, consequently, sterile: and, besides, in favour of worms, it should be hinted, that green corn, plants and flowers are not so much injured by them as by many species of *coleoptera* (scarabs), and *tipulæ* (long-legs), in their larva or grub-state; and by unnoticed myriads of small shell-less snails, called slugs, which silently and imperceptibly make amazing havoc in the field and garden.†

These hints we think proper to throw out, in order to set the inquisitive and discerning to work.

A good monography of worms would afford much enter-

* We are indebted to Charles Darwin, Esq., for a remarkable and interesting memoir on the utility of the earth-worm, read before the Geological Society. The worm-casts, which so much annoy the gardener by deforming his smooth-shaven lawns, are of no small importance to the agriculturist; and this despised creature is not only of great service in loosening the earth, and rendering it permeable by air and water, but is also a most active and powerful agent in *adding to the depth of the soil*, and in covering comparatively barren tracts with a superficial layer of wholesome mould. The author's attention was directed by Mr. Wedgwood, of Maer Hall, Staffordshire, to several fields, some of which had a few years before been covered with lime, and others with burnt marl and cinders, which substances in every case are now buried to the depth of some inches below the turf, just as if, as the farmers believe, the particles had worked themselves down. After showing the impossibility of this supposed operation, the author affirms that the whole is due to the digestive process by which the common earth-worm is supported; since, on carefully examining between the blades of grass in the fields above-mentioned, he found that there was scarcely a space of two inches square without a little heap of cylindrical castings of worms; it being well known that worms swallow the earthy matter, and that having separated the serviceable portion, they eject at the mouth of their burrows the remainder in little intestine-shaped heaps. Still more recently Mr. Darwin has noticed a more remarkable instance of this kind, in which, in the course of eighty years, the earth-worm had covered a field then manured with marl, with a bed of earth, averaging thirteen inches in thickness.

† Farmer Young, of Norton-farm, says, that this spring (1777) about four acres of his wheat in one field was entirely destroyed by slugs, which swarmed on the blades of corn, and devoured it as fast as it sprang.

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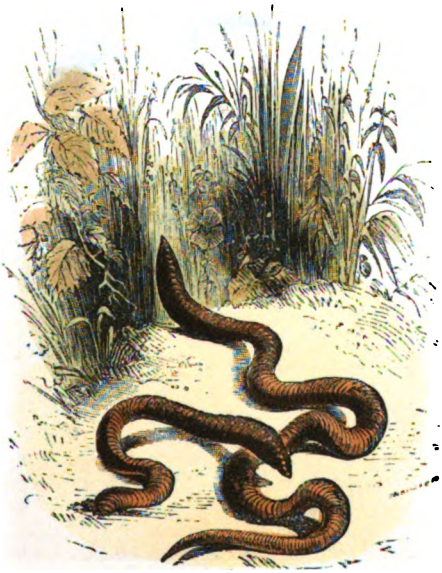

WORMS. (*Vermes.*)

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tainment, and information, at the same time; and would open a large and new field in natural history. Worms work most in the spring, but by no means lie torpid in the dead months; are out every mild night in the winter, as any person may be convinced that will take the pains to examine his grass plots with a candle; are hermaphrodites, and much addicted to venery, and consequently very prolific.

## LETTER LXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 22, 1777.

DEAR SIR,—You cannot but remember that the 26th and 27th of last March were very hot days; so sultry, that every body complained, and were restless under those sensations to which they had not been reconciled by gradual approaches.

This sudden summer-like heat was attended by many summer coincidences; for, on those two days, the thermometer rose to sixty-six in the shade; many species of insects revived and came forth; some bees swarmed in this neighbourhood; the old tortoise, near Lewes, awakened, and came forth out of its dormitory; and, what is most to my present purpose, many house-swallows appeared, and were very alert in many places, and particularly at Cobham, in Surrey.

But as that short warm period was succeeded as well as preceded by harsh, severe weather, with frequent frosts and ice, and cutting winds, the insects withdrew, the tortoise retired again into the ground, and the swallows were seen no more until the 10th of April, when the rigour of the spring abating, a softer season began to prevail.

Again, it appears by my journals for many years past, that house-martins retire, to a bird, about the beginning of October; so that a person not very observant of such matters would conclude that they had taken their last farewell; but then it may be seen in my diaries, also, that considerable flocks have discovered themselves again in the first week of November, and often on the fourth day of that month, only



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for one day; and that not as if they were in actual migration, but playing about at their leisure, and feeding calmly, as if no enterprise of moment at all agitated their spirits. And this was the case in the beginning of this very month; for, on the 4th of November, more than twenty house-martins, which, in appearance, had all departed about the 7th of October, were seen again, for that one morning only, sporting between my fields and the Hanger, and feasting on insects which swarmed in that sheltered district. The preceding day was wet and blustering, but the fourth was dark, and mild, and soft, the wind at south-west, and the thermometer at 58½, a pitch not common at that season of the year. Moreover, it may not be amiss to add in this place, that whenever the thermometer is above 50, the bat comes flitting out in every autumnal and winter month.

From all these circumstances laid together, it is obvious that torpid insects, reptiles, and quadrupeds, are awakened from their profoundest slumbers by a little untimely warmth, and, therefore, that nothing so much promotes this death-like stupor as a defect of heat. And, farther, it is reasonable to suppose, that two whole species, or at least many individuals of these two species of British *hirundines*, do never leave this island at all, but partake of the same benumbed state; for we cannot suppose that, after a month's absence, house-martins can return from southern regions to appear for one morning in November, or that house-swallows should leave the districts of Africa to enjoy, in March, the transient summer of a couple of days.

## LETTER LXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Jan.* 8, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—There was in this little village several years ago, a miserable pauper who from his birth was afflicted with a leprosy, as far as we are aware, of a singular kind, since it affected only the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet.

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This scaly eruption usually broke out twice in the year, at the spring and fall; and by peeling away left the skin so thin and tender that neither his hands nor his feet were able to perform their functions; so that the poor object was half his time on crutches, incapable of employ, and languishing in a tiresome state of indolence and inactivity. His habit was lean, lank, and cadaverous. In this sad plight he dragged on a miserable existence, a burden to himself and his parish, which was obliged to support him, till he was relieved by death, at more than thirty years of age.

The good women, who love to account for every defect in children by the doctrine of longing, said that his mother felt a violent propensity for oysters, which she was unable to gratify, and that the black rough scurf on his hands and feet were the shells of that fish. We knew his parents, neither of whom were lepers; his father, in particular, lived to be far advanced in years.

In all ages, the leprosy has made dreadful havoc among mankind. The Israelites seem to have been greatly afflicted with it from the most remote times, as appears from the peculiar and repeated injunctions given them in the Levitical law.* Nor was the rancour of this foul disorder much abated in the last period of their commonwealth, as may be seen in many passages of the New Testament.

Some centuries ago, this horrible distemper prevailed all over Europe; and our forefathers were by no means exempt, as appears by the large provision made for objects labouring under this calamity. There was an hospital for female lepers in the diocese of Lincoln, a noble one near Durham, three in London and Southwark, and perhaps many more in or near our great towns and cities. Moreover, some crowned heads, and other wealthy and charitable personages, bequeathed large legacies to such poor people as languished under this hopeless infirmity.

It must, therefore, in these days be to a humane and thinking person a matter of equal wonder and satisfaction when he contemplates how nearly this pest is eradicated, and observes that a leper is now a rare sight. He will, moreover, when engaged in such a train of thought, naturally

* See Leviticus, chap. xiii. and xiv.

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inquire for the reason. This happy change, perhaps, may have originated and been continued from the much smaller quantity of salted meat and fish now eaten in these kingdoms —from the use of linen next the skin—from the plenty of better bread—and from the profusion of fruits, roots, legumes, and greens, so common in every family. Three or four centuries ago, before there were any enclosures, sown grasses, field turnips, or field carrots, or hay, all the cattle that had grown fat in summer, and were not killed for winter use, were turned out soon after Michaelmas to shift as they could through the dead months: so that no fresh meat could be had in winter or spring. Hence the marvellous account of the vast stores of salted flesh found in the larder of the eldest Spencer,* in the days of Edward the Second, even so late in the spring as the 3d of May. It was from magazines like these that the turbulent barons supported in idleness their riotous swarms of retainers, ready for any disorder or mischief. But agriculture has now arrived at such a pitch of perfection, that our best and fattest meats are killed in the winter; and no man needs eat salted flesh, unless he prefer it, that has money to buy fresh.

One cause of this distemper might be, no doubt, the quantity of wretched fresh and salt fish consumed by the commonalty at all seasons, as well as in Lent, which our poor now would hardly be persuaded to touch.

The use of linen changes, shifts or shirts, in the room of sordid or filthy woollen, long worn next the skin, is a matter of neatness comparatively modern, but must prove a great means of preventing cutaneous ails. At this very time, woollen instead of linen prevails among the poorer Welsh, who are subject to foul eruptions.

The plenty of good wheaten bread that now is found among all ranks of people in the south, instead of that miserable sort which used in old days to be made of barley or beans, may contribute not a little to the sweetening their blood, and correcting their juices; for the inhabitants of mountainous districts to this day are still liable to the itch and other cutaneous disorders, from a wretchedness and poverty of diet.

* Viz. six hundred bacons, eighty carcasses of beef, and six hundred muttons.

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As to the produce of a garden, every middled-aged person of observation may perceive, within his own memory, both in town and country, how vastly the consumption of vegetables is increased. Green stalls in cities now support multitudes in a comfortable state, while gardeners get fortunes. Every decent labourer also has his garden, which is half his support, as well as his delight; and common farmers provide plenty of beans, peas, and greens, for their hinds to eat with their bacon; and those few that do not are despised for their sordid parsimony, and looked upon as regardless of the welfare of their dependents. Potatoes have prevailed in this little district, by means of premiums, within these twenty years only, and are much esteemed here now by the poor, who would scarce have ventured to taste them in the last reign.

Our Saxon ancestors certainly had some sort of cabbage, because they call the month of February sprout-cale; but long after their days the cultivation of gardens was little attended to. The religious, being men of leisure, and keeping up a constant correspondence with Italy, were the first people among us who had gardens and fruit-trees in any perfection, within the walls of their abbeys* and priories. The barons neglected every pursuit that did not lead to war, or tend to the pleasure of the chase.

It was not till gentlemen took up the study of horticulture themselves that the knowledge of gardening made such hasty advances. Lord Cobham, Lord Ila, and Mr. Waller, of Beaconsfield, were some of the first people of rank that promoted the elegant science of ornamenting, without despising the superintendence of the kitchen quarters and fruit walls.

A remark made by the excellent Mr. Ray in his *Tour of Europe*, at once surprises us, and corroborates what has been advanced above; for we find him observing, so late as his days, that "the Italians use several herbs for sallets, which are not yet, or have not been but lately used in England, viz.

* "In monasteries, the lamp of knowledge continued to burn, however dimly. In them, men of business were formed for the state. The art of writing was cultivated by the monks; they were the only proficients in mechanics, *gardening*, and architecture."—See DALRYMPLE'S *Annals of Scotland*.

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*selleri* (celery), which is nothing else but the sweet smallage, the young shoots whereof, with a little of the head of the root cut off, they eat raw with oil and pepper." And further, he adds, "curled endive blanched is much used beyond seas, and for a raw sallet, seemed to excel lettuce itself." Now this journey was undertaken no longer ago than in the year 1663.

## LETTER LXXX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Feb.* 12, 1778.

"Fortè puer, comitum seductus ab agmine fido,
Dixerat, ecquis adest? et, adest, responderat echo.
Hic stupet; utque aciem partes divisit in omnes;
Voce, veni, clamat magnâ. Vocat illa vocantem."

DEAR SIR,—In a district so diversified as this, so full of hollow vales and hanging woods, it is no wonder that echoes should abound. Many we have discovered, that return the cry of a pack of dogs, the notes of a hunting horn, a tunable ring of bells, or the melody of birds, very agreeably; but we were still at a loss for a polysyllabical articulate echo, till a young gentleman, who had parted from his company in a summer evening walk, and was calling after them, stumbled upon a very curious one in a spot where it might least be expected. At first he was much surprised, and could not be persuaded but that he was mocked by some boys; but, repeating his trials in several languages, and finding his respondent to be a very adroit polyglot, he then discerned the deception.

This echo, in an evening before rural noises cease, would repeat ten syllables most articulately and distinctly, especially if quick dactyls were chosen. The last syllables of

"Tityre, tu patulæ recubans ——"

were as audibly and intelligibly returned as the first; and

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there is no doubt, could trial have been made, but that at midnight, when the air is very elastic, and a dead stillness prevails, one or two syllables more might have been obtained; but the distance rendered so late an experiment very inconvenient.

Quick dactyls, we observed, succeeded best; for when we came to try its powers in slow, heavy, embarrassed spondees of the same number of syllables,

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens ——"

we could perceive a return of but four or five.

All echoes have some one place to which they are returned stronger and more distinct than to any other; and that is always the place that lies at right angles with the object of repercussion, and is not too near, nor too far off. Buildings, or naked rocks, re-echo much more articulately than hanging woods or vales; because, in the latter, the voice is as it were entangled, and embarrassed in the covert, and weakened in the rebound.

The true object of this echo, as we found by various experiments, is the stone-built, tiled hop-kiln in Gally Lane, which measures in front 40 feet, and from the ground to the eaves 12 feet. The true *centrum phonicum*, or just distance, is one particular spot in the King's Field, in the path to Norehill, on the very brink of the steep balk above the hollow cart-way. In this case, there is no choice of distance; but the path, by mere contingency, happens to be the lucky, the identical spot, because the ground rises or falls so immediately, if the speaker either retires or advances, that his mouth would at once be above or below the object.

We measured this polysyllabical echo with great exactness, and found the distance to fall very short of Dr. Plot's rule for distant articulation; for the Doctor, in his *History of Oxfordshire*, allows 120 feet for the return of each syllable distinctly; hence this echo, which gives ten distinct syllables, ought to measure 400 yards, or 120 feet to each syllable; whereas our distance is only 258 yards, or near 75 feet to each syllable. Thus our measure falls short of the Doctor's as five to eight; but then it must be acknowledged, that this candid philosopher was convinced afterwards, that some

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latitude must be admitted of in the distance of echoes according to time and place.

When experiments of this sort are making, it should always be remembered, that weather and the time of day have a vast influence on an echo; for a dull, heavy, moist air deadens and clogs the sound; and hot sunshine renders the air thin and weak, and deprives it of all its springiness; and a ruffling wind quite defeats the whole. In a still, clear dewy evening, the air is most elastic; and perhaps the later the hour the more so.

Echo has always been so amusing to the imagination, that the poets have personified her; and in their hands she has been the occasion of many a beautiful fiction. Nor need the gravest man be ashamed to appear taken with such a phenomenon, since it may become the subject of philosophical or mathematical inquiries.

One should have imagined that echoes, if not entertaining, must at least have been harmless and inoffensive: yet Virgil advances a strange notion, that they are injurious to bees. After enumerating some probable and reasonable annoyances, such as prudent owners would wish far removed from their bee-gardens, he adds,

> ——— "Aut ubi concava pulsu
> Saxa sonant, vocisque offensa resultat imago."
>
> Or where the hollow rocks emit a sound,
> And echoed voices from the cliffs rebound.

This wild and fanciful assertion will hardly be admitted by the philosophers of these days, especially as they all now seem agreed that insects are not furnished with any organs of hearing at all.* But if it should be urged, that, though they cannot hear, yet perhaps they may feel the repercussion of sounds, I grant it is possible they may. Yet that these impressions are distasteful or hurtful I deny, because bees, in good summers, thrive well in my outlet, where the echoes are very strong; for this village is another Anathoth, a

* Bees certainly utter a murmuring sound when their hives have been tapped in the still of the evening as I have frequently ascertained. The chirping of the house-cricket is probably to induce the female to come to it.—Ed.

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place of responses, or echoes. Besides, it does not appear from experiment that bees are in any way capable of being affected by sounds: for I have often tried my own with a large speaking trumpet held close to their hives, and with such an exertion of voice as would have hailed a ship at the distance of a mile, and still these insects pursued their various employments undisturbed, and without showing the least sensibility or resentment.

Some time since its discovery, this echo is become totally silent, the object or hop-kiln remains: nor is there any mystery in this defect, for the field between is planted as a hop-garden, and the voice of the speaker is totally absorbed and lost among the poles and entangled foliage of the hops. And when the poles are removed in autumn, the disappointment is the same; because a tall quick-set hedge, nurtured up for the purpose of shelter to the hop-ground, entirely interrupts the impulse and repercussion of the voice: so that, till those obstructions are removed, no more of its garrulity can be expected.

Should any gentleman of fortune think an echo in his park or outlet a pleasant incident, he might build one at little or no expense. For, whenever he had occasion for a new barn, stable, dog-kennel, or the like structure, it would be only needful to erect this building on the gentle declivity of a hill, with a like rising opposite to it, at a few hundred yards distance; and perhaps success might be the easier insured could some canal, lake or stream, intervene. From a seat at the phonic centre, he and his friends might amuse themselves sometimes of an evening with the prattle of this loquacious nymph; of whose complacency and decent reserve, more may be said than can with truth of every individual of her sex; since she is

> "Quæ nec *reticere* loquenti.
> Nec *prior* ipsa loqui, didicit resonabilis echo."
>
> The vocal echo ne'er withholds reply,
> But ne'er intrudes.

P.S. The classic reader will, I trust, pardon the following lovely quotation, so finely describing echoes, and so poetically accounting for their causes from popular superstition.

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" Quæ benè quom videas, rationem reddere possis
Tute tibi atque aliis, quo pacto per loca sola
Saxa pareis formas verborum ex ordine reddant,
Palanteis comites quom monteis inter opacos
Quærimus, et magnâ dispersos voce ciemus,
Sex etiam, aut septem loca vidi reddere voces
Unam quom jaceres: ita colles collibus ipsis
Verba repulsantes iterabant dicta referre.
Hæc loca capripedes Satyros, Nymphasque tenere
Finitimi fingunt, et Faunos esse loquuntur;
Quorum noctivago strepitu, ludoque jocanti
Adfirmant volgo taciturna silentia rumpi.
Chordarumque sonos fieri, dulceisque querelas,
Tibia quas fundit digitis pulsata canentum;
Et genus agricolûm latè sentiscere, quom Pan
Pinea semiferi capitis velamina quassans,
Unco sæpe labro calamos percurrit hianteis,
Fistula silvestrem ne cesset fundere musam."

LUCRETIUS, lib. iv. l. 576.

This shows thee why, whilst men, through caves and groves,
Call their lost friends, or mourn unhappy loves,
The pitying rocks, the groaning caves return
Their sad complaints again, and seem to mourn:
This all observe, and I myself have known
Both rocks and hills return six words for one:
The dancing words from hill to hill rebound,
They all receive, and all restore the sound:
The vulgar and the neighbours think, and tell,
That there the Nymphs and Fauns, and Satyrs dwell:
And that their wanton sport, their loud delight,
Breaks through the quiet silence of the night:
Their music's softest airs fill all the plains,
And mighty Pan delights the list'ning swains:
The goat-faced Pan, whose flocks securely feed;
With long-hung lip he blows his oaken reed:
The horned, the half-beast god, when brisk and gay,
With pine-leaves crowned, provokes the swains to play.

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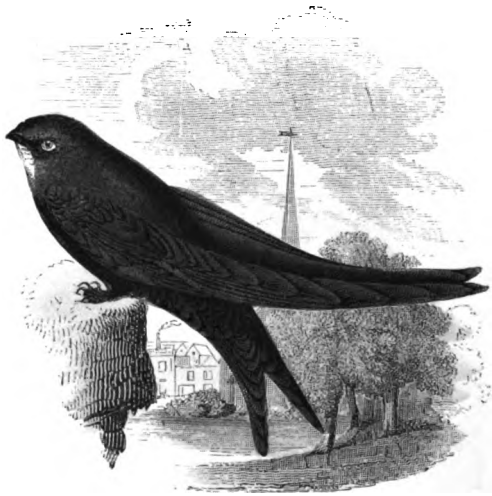

THE SWIFT.

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## LETTER LXXXI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *May* 13, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—Among the many singularities attending those amusing birds, the swifts, I am now confirmed in the opinion that we have every year the same number of pairs invariably; at least the result of my inquiry has been exactly the same for a long time past. The swallows and martins are so numerous, and so widely distributed over the village, that it is hardly possible to recount them; while the swifts, though they do not all build in the church, yet so frequently haunt it, and play and rendezvous round it, that they are easily enumerated. The number that I constantly find are eight pairs, about half of which reside in the church, and the rest in some of the lowest and meanest thatched cottages. Now, as these eight pairs—allowance being made for accidents—breed yearly eight pairs more, what becomes annually of this increase? and what determines, every spring, which pairs shall visit us, and re-occupy their ancient haunts? *

Ever since I have attended to the subject of ornithology, I have always supposed that the sudden reverse of affection, that strange *ἀντιστόργη*, which immediately succeeds in the feathered kind to the most passionate fondness, is the occasion of an equal dispersion of birds over the face of the earth. Without this provision, one favourite district would be crowded with inhabitants, while others would be destitute and forsaken. But the parent birds seem to maintain a jealous superiority, and to oblige the young to seek for new abodes; and the rivalry of the males in many kinds prevents their crowding the one on the other. Whether the swallows and house-martins return in the same exact number annually is not easy to say, for reasons given

* Swifts, swallows, and martins are perhaps, from their rapid flight, less preyed upon than any other small birds. Numbers of them undoubtedly perish during the progress of their two annual migrations.—ED.

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above; but it is apparent, as I have remarked before in my *Monographies*, that the numbers returning bear no manner of proportion to the numbers retiring.

## LETTER LXXXII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *June* 2, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—The standing objection to botany has always been, that it is a pursuit that amuses the fancy and exercises the memory, without improving the mind, or advancing any real knowledge; and, where the science is carried no farther than a mere systematic classification, the charge is but too true. But the botanist that is desirous of wiping off this aspersion, should be by no means content with a list of names; he should study plants philosophically, should investigate the laws of vegetation, should examine the powers and virtues of efficacious herbs, should promote their cultivation, and graft the gardener, the planter, and the husbandman on the phytologist. Not that system is by any means to be thrown aside—without system the field of Nature would be a pathless wilderness—but system should be subservient to, not the main object of, pursuit.

Vegetation is highly worthy of our attention, and in itself is of the utmost consequence to mankind, and productive of many of the greatest comforts and elegancies of life. To plants we owe timber, bread, beer, honey, wine, oil, linen, cotton, &c.—what not only strengthens our hearts, and exhilarates our spirits, but what secures us from inclemencies of weather, and adorns our persons. Man, in his true state of nature, seems to be subsisted by spontaneous vegetation; in middle climes, where grasses prevail, he mixes some animal food with the produce of the field and garden: and it is towards the polar extremes only, that, like his kindred bears and wolves, he gorges himself with flesh alone, and is driven to what hunger has never been known to compel the very beasts—to prey upon his own species.*

* See the late voyages to the South Seas.

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The productions of vegetation have had a vast influence on the commerce of nations, and have been the great promoters of navigation, as may be seen in the articles of sugar, tea, tobacco, opium, ginseng, betel, pepper, &c. As every climate has its peculiar produce, our natural wants bring a mutual intercourse: so that by means of trade, each distant part is supplied with the growth of every latitude. But, without the knowledge of plants and their culture, we must have been content with our hips and haws, without enjoying the delicate fruits of India, and the salutiferous drugs of Pern.

Instead of examining the minute distinctions of every various species of each obscure genus, the botanist should endeavour to make himself acquainted with those that are useful. You shall see a man readily ascertain every herb of the field, yet hardly know wheat from barley, or at least one sort of wheat or barley from another.

But of all sorts of vegetation the grasses seem to be most neglected; neither the farmer nor the grazier seem to distinguish the annual from the perennial, the hardy from the tender, nor the succulent and nutritive from the dry and juiceless.

The study of grasses would be of great consequence to a northerly and grazing kingdom. The botanist that could improve the sward of the district where he lived, would be an useful member of society: to raise a thick turf on a naked soil, would be worth volumes of systematic knowledge; and he would be the best commonwealth's man that could occasion the growth of "two blades of grass where one alone was seen before."

## LETTER LXXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *July* 3, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—In a district so diversified with such a variety of hill and dale, aspects and soils, it is no wonder that great choice of plants should be found. Chalks, clays, sands, sheep-walks and downs, bogs, heaths, woodlands, and cham-

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paign fields, cannot but furnish an ample *flora*. The deep rocky lanes abound with *filices*, and the pastures and moist woods with *fungi*. If in any branch of botany we may seem to be wanting, it must be in the large aquatic plants, which are not to be expected on a spot far removed from rivers, and lying up amidst the hill-country at the spring-heads. To enumerate all the plants that have been discovered within our limits, would be a needless work; but a short list of the more rare, and the spots where they are to be found, may neither be unacceptable nor unentertaining.

*Helleborus fœtidus*, stinking hellebore, bear's-foot, or setterwort—all over the Highwood and Coneycroft-hanger; this continues a great branching plant the winter through, blossoming about January, and is very ornamental in shady walks and shrubberies. The good women give the leaves powdered to children troubled with worms; but it is a violent remedy, and ought to be administered with caution.

*Helleborus viridis*, green hellebore—in the deep stony lane, on the left hand just before the turning to Norton farm, and at the top of Middle Dorton under the edge; this plant dies down to the ground early in autumn, and springs again about February, flowering almost as soon as it appears above ground.

*Vaccinium oxycoccus*, creeping bilberries, or cranberries—in the bogs of Bin's pond;

*Vaccinium myrtillus*, whortle, or bilberries—on the dry hillocks of Wolmer Forest;

*Drosera rotundifolia*, round-leaved sundew—in the bogs of Bin's-pond;

*Drosera longifolia*,* long-leaved sundew—in the bogs of Bin's-pond.

*Comarum palustre*, purple comarum, or marsh cinque-foil—in the bogs of Bin's-pond.

*Hypericum androsæmum*, Tutsan, St. John's wort—in the stony, hollow lanes;

*Vinca minor*, less periwinkle—in Selborne-hanger and Shrub-wood;

*Monatropa hypopithys*, yellow monotropa, or bird's-nest—in Selborne-hanger under the shady beeches, to whose roots it seems to be parasitical—at the north-west end of the Hanger;

* Should this not have been *Drosera Anglica*?—W. J.

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*Chlora perfoliata*, *Blackstonia perfoliata*, *Hudsoni*, perfoliated yellow-wort—on the banks in the King's Field;

*Paris quadrifolia*, herb Paris, true love, or one-berry—in the Church-litten coppice;

*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, opposite golden saxifrage—in the dark and rocky hollow lanes;

*Gentiana amarella*, autumnal gentian, or fellwort—on the Zig-zag and Hanger;

*Lathræa squammaria*, tooth-wort—in the Church-litten coppice, under some hazels near the foot-bridge, in Trimming's garden hedge, and on the dry wall opposite Grange-yard;

*Dipsacus pilosus*, small teasel—in the Short and Long Lith;

*Lathyrus sylvestris*, narrow-leaved, or wild lathyrus—in the bushes at the foot of the Short Lith, near the path;

*Ophrys spiralis*, ladies' traces—in the Long Lith, and towards the south corner of the common;

*Ophrys nidus avis*, bird's nest ophrys—in the Long Lith, under the shady beeches among the dead leaves, in Great Dorton among the bushes, and on the Hanger plentifully;

*Serapias latifolia*, helleborine—in the Highwood under the shady beeches;

*Daphne laureola*, spurge-laurel—in Selborne-hanger and the High-wood;

*Daphne mezereum*, the mezereon—in Selborne-hanger, among the shrubs at the south-east end, above the cottages;

*Lycoperdon tuber*, truffles—in the Hanger and High-wood;

*Sambucus ebulus*, dwarf-elder, wal-wort, or dane-wort—among the rubbish and ruined foundations of the Priory.

Of all the propensities of plants, none seem more strange than their different periods of blossoming. Some produce their flowers in the winter, or very first dawnings of spring; many when the spring is established; some at midsummer, and some not till autumn. When we see the *helleborus fœtidus* and *helleborus niger* blowing at Christmas, the *helleborus hyemalis* in January, and the *helleborus viridis* as soon as ever it emerges out of the ground, we do not wonder, because they are kindred plants that we expect should keep pace the one with the other; but other congenerous vegetables differ so widely in their time of flowering, that we cannot but admire. I shall only instance at present in the



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*crocus sativus*, the vernal and the autumnal crocus, which have such an affinity, that the best botanists only make them varieties of the same genus, of which there is only one species, not being able to discern any difference in the corolla, or in the internal structure. Yet the vernal crocus expands its flowers by the beginning of March at farthest, and often in very rigorous weather; and cannot be retarded but by some violence offered; while the autumnal (the saffron) defies the influence of the spring and summer, and will not blow till most plants begin to fade and run to seed. This circumstance is one of the wonders of the creation, little noticed because a common occurrence, yet ought not to be overlooked on account of its being familiar, since it would be as difficult to be explained as the most stupendous phenomenon in nature.

"Say, what impels, amidst surrounding snow
Congeal'd, the crocus' flamy bud to glow?
Say, what retards, amidst the summer's blaze,
Th' autumnal bulb, till pale, declining days?
The GOD of SEASONS; whose pervading power
Controls the sun, or sheds the fleecy shower:
He bids each flower his quickening word obey,
Or to each lingering bloom enjoins delay."

## LETTER LXXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Aug. 7*, 1778.

"Omnibus animalibus reliquis certus et uniusmodi, et in suo cuique genere incessus est; aves solæ vario meatu feruntur, et in terrâ, et in aere."—PLIN. *Hist. Nat.* lib. x. cap. 38.

All other animals have a certain, definite, and peculiar gait; birds alone move in a varied manner both on the ground and in the air.

DEAR SIR,—A good ornithologist should be able to distinguish birds by their air, as well as by their colours and shape, on the ground as well as on the wing, and in the bush as well as in the hand. For, though it must not be said that every species of birds has a manner peculiar to

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THE KITE. (*Falco Milvus.*)

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itself, yet there is somewhat in most genera at least that at first sight discriminates them, and enables a judicious observer to pronounce upon them with some certainty. Put a bird in motion,

"Et vera incessu patuit.'

And it is truly declared by its gait.

Thus kites and buzzards sail round in circles,* with wings expanded and motionless; and it is from their gliding manner that the former are still called, in the north of England, gleads, from the Saxon verb *glidan*, to glide. The kestrel, or windhover, has a peculiar mode of hanging in the air in one place, his wings all the while being briskly agitated.† Hen-harriers fly low over heaths or fields of corn, and beat the ground regularly like a pointer or setting dog. Owls move in a buoyant manner, as if lighter than the air; they seem to want ballast. There is a peculiarity belonging to ravens that must draw the attention even of the most incurious—they spend all their leisure time in striking and cuffing each other on the wing in a kind of playful skirmish; and when they move from one place to another, frequently turn on their backs with a loud croak, and seem to be falling on the ground. When this odd gesture betides them, they are scratching themselves with one foot, and thus lose the centre of gravity. Rooks sometimes dive and tumble in a frolicsome manner;‡ crows and daws swagger in their walk; woodpeckers fly *volatu undoso*, opening and closing their wings at every stroke, and so

* This sailing round in circles, with wings expanded, and apparently quite motionless, is very curious and difficult to understand. A friend tells me that he has frequently watched the flight of the carrion crow (*Vultur Aura*), both in Africa and the West Indies, where, as in all tropical countries, they abound, and are invaluable. This bird soars at very great heights—at one moment it seems stationary, and at another it sweeps round in large circles without the smallest visible motion of the wings, the wind blowing steadily from one point. How are these circles completed *against* the wind without perceptible muscular exertion?—Ed.

† "The hawk *proineth*," says the new glossary to Chaucer; that is, pricketh or dresseth her feathers. From hence the word *prcen*, a term in ornithology, when birds adjust and oil their feathers.—Ed.

‡ In some parts of Scotland, that is said and believed to be the forerunner of stormy weather.—W. J.



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are always rising and falling in curves. All of this genus use their tails, which incline downwards, as a support while they run up trees. Parrots, like all other hooked-clawed birds, walk awkwardly, and make use of their bill as a third foot, climbing and descending with ridiculous caution. All the *gallinæ* parade and walk gracefully, and run nimbly; but fly with difficulty, with an impetuous whirring, and in a straight line. Magpies and jays flutter with powerless wings, and make no dispatch; herons * seem encumbered with too much sail for their light bodies; but these vast hollow wings are necessary in carrying burdens, such as large fishes, and the like; pigeons, and particularly the sort called smiters, have a way of clashing their wings, the one against the other, over their backs, with a loud snap; another variety, called tumblers, turn themselves over in the air. Some birds have movements peculiar to the season of love; thus ring-doves, though strong and rapid at other times, yet, in the spring, hang about on the wing in a toying and playful manner; thus the cock-snipe, while breeding, forgetting his former flight, fans the air like a windhover; and the greenfinch, in particular, exhibits such languishing and faltering gestures as to appear like a wounded and dying bird; the king-fisher darts along like an arrow; fern-owls, or goat-suckers, glance in the dusk over the tops of trees like a meteor; starlings, as it were, swim along, while missel-thrushes use a wild and desultory flight; swallows sweep over the surface of the ground and water, and distinguish themselves by rapid turns and quick evolutions; swifts dash round in circles; and the bank-martin moves with frequent vacillations like a butterfly. Most of the small birds fly by jerks, rising and falling as they advance. Most small birds hop; but wagtails and larks walk, moving their legs alternately. Sky-larks rise and fall perpendicularly as they sing; woodlarks hang poised in the air; and tit-larks rise and fall in large curves, singing in their descent. The white-throat uses odd jerks and gesticulations over the tops of hedges and bushes. All the duck kind waddle; divers and auks walk as if fettered, and stand

* When herons *sail* over their nests, when disturbed from them, they use their long legs as rudders in making their gyrations. They sometimes only use one leg, at others both. In a straight flight the head rests between the shoulders and the legs are extended together.—Ed.

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erect on their tails; these are the *compedes* of Linnæus. Geese and cranes, and most wild fowls, move in figured flights, often changing their position. The secondary remiges of Tringæ, wild ducks, and some others, are very long, and give their wings, when in motion, an hooked appearance. Dabchicks, moor-hens, and coots,* fly erect, with their legs hanging down, and hardly make any dispatch; the reason is plain, their wings are placed too forward out of the true centre of gravity; as the legs of auks and divers are situated too backward.

## LETTER LXXXV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 9, 1778.

DEAR SIR,—From the motion of birds, the transition is natural enough to their notes and language, of which I shall say something. Not that I would pretend to understand their language like a vizier, who, by the recital of a conversation which passed between two owls, reclaimed a sultan,† before delighting in conquest and devastation; but I would be thought only to mean, that many of the winged tribes have various sounds and voices adapted to express their various passions, wants, and feelings, such as anger, fear, love, hatred, hunger, and the like. All species are not equally eloquent; some are copious and fluent, as it were, in their utterance, while others are confined to a few important sounds; no bird, like the fish‡ kind, is quite mute, though some are rather silent. The language of birds is

* Coots have a very powerful flight when once on the wing and fly with their legs stretched out behind, acting the part of a tail, in the manner of the heron. In Scotland and the north of England, they arrive in the marshes and lakes to breed, and retire at the commencement of winter to the more southern coasts.—W. J.

† See Spectator, vol. vii. No. 512.

‡ Fish are not always mute. I have not unfrequently heard tench utter sounds, and Mr. Thompson of Hull, says that some tench which he caught made a croaking like a frog for a full half hour, whilst in the basket on his shoulder.—ED.

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very ancient, and like other ancient modes of speech, very elliptical: little is said, but much is meant and understood.*

The notes of the eagle kind are shrill and piercing; and about the season of nidification much diversified, as I have been often assured by a curious observer of Nature, who long resided at Gibraltar, where eagles abound. The notes of our hawks much resemble those of the king of birds. Owls have very expressive notes; they hoot in a fine vocal sound, much resembling the *vox humana*, and reducible by a pitch-pipe to a musical key. This note seems to express complacency and rivalry among the males; they use also a quick call and a horrible scream; and can snore and hiss when they mean to menace. Ravens, besides their loud croak, can exert a deep and solemn note that makes the woods to echo; the amorous sound of a crow is strange and ridiculous; rooks, in the breeding season, attempt sometimes, in the gaiety of their hearts, to sing, but with no great success; the parrot kind have many modulations of voice, as appears by their aptitude to learn human sounds; doves coo in an amorous and mournful manner, and are emblems of despairing lovers; the woodpecker sets up a sort of loud and hearty laugh; the fern-owl, or goat-sucker, from the dusk till day-break, serenades his mate with the clattering of castanets. All the tuneful *passeres* express their complacency by sweet modulations, and a variety of melody. The swallow, as has been observed in a former letter, by a shrill alarm, bespeaks the attention of the other *hirundines*, and bids them be aware that the hawk is at hand. Aquatic and gregarious birds, especially the nocturnal, that shift their quarters in the dark, are very noisy and loquacious; as cranes, wild-geese, wild-ducks, and the like: their perpetual clamour prevents them from dispersing and losing their companions.

In so extensive a subject, sketches and outlines are as much as can be expected: for it would be endless to instance in all the infinite variety of the feathered nation. We shall, therefore, confine the remainder of this letter to the few domestic fowls of our yards, which are most known, and,

* The call of birds that fly in families, as the tit-mice-jays, &c., when they have been separated and want to find each other, is very interesting.—Ed.

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therefore, best understood. At first,—the peacock, with his gorgeous train, demands our attention; but, like most of the gaudy birds, his notes are grating and shocking to the ear: the yelling of cats, and the braying of an ass, are not more disgustful. The voice of the goose is trumpet-like, and clanking; and once saved the Capitol at Rome, as grave historians assert: the hiss also of the gander is formidable, and full of menace, and "protective of his young." Among ducks, the sexual distinction of voice is remarkable; for, while the quack of the female is loud and sonorous, the voice of the drake is inward, and harsh, and feeble, and scarce discernible. The cock-turkey struts and gobbles to his mistress in a most uncouth manner; he hath also a pert and petulant note when he attacks his adversary. When a hen-turkey leads forth her young brood, she keeps a watchful eye; and if a bird of prey appear, though ever so high in the air, the careful mother announces the enemy with a little inward moan, and watches him with a steady and attentive look; but, if he approach, her note becomes earnest and alarming, and her outcries are redoubled.

No inhabitants of a yard seem possessed of such a variety of expression, and so copious a language, as common poultry. Take a chicken of four or five days old, and hold it up to a window where there are flies, and it will immediately seize its prey with little twitterings of complacency; but if you tender it a wasp or a bee, at once its note becomes harsh and expressive of disapprobation, and a sense of danger. When a pullet is ready to lay, she intimates the event by a joyous and easy soft note. Of all the occurrences of their life, that of laying seems to be the most important; for, no sooner has a hen disburdened herself, than she rushes forth with a clamorous kind of joy, which the cock and the rest of his mistresses immediately adopt. The tumult is not confined to the family concerned, but catches from yard to yard, and spreads to every homestead within hearing, till at last the whole village is in an uproar. As soon as a hen becomes a mother, her new relation demands a new language; she then runs clucking and screaming about, and seems agitated as if possessed. The father of the flock has also a considerable vocabulary; if he finds food, he calls a favourite concubine to partake; and if a bird of prey passes over, with

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a warning voice he bids his family beware. The gallant chanticleer has, at command, his amorous phrases, and his terms of defiance. But the sound by which he is best known is his crowing: by this he has been distinguished in all ages as the countryman's clock or larum—as the watchman that proclaims the divisions of the night. Thus the poet elegantly styles him

> "The crested cock, whose clarion sounds
> The silent hours."

A neighbouring gentleman, one summer, had lost most of his chickens by a sparrow-hawk, that came gliding down between a fagot pile and the end of his house to the place where the coops stood. The owner, inwardly vexed to see his flock thus diminishing, hung a setting net adroitly between the pile and the house, into which the caitiff dashed, and was entangled. Resentment suggested the law of retaliation; he therefore clipped the hawk's wings, cut off his talons, and, fixing a cork on his bill, threw him down among the brood-hens. Imagination cannot paint the scene that ensued; the expressions that fear, rage, and revenge inspired, were new, or at least such as had been unnoticed before. The exasperated matrons upbraided—they execrated—they insulted—they triumphed. In a word, they never desisted from buffeting their adversary till they had torn him in a hundred pieces.

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## LETTER LXXXVI.

### TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE.

"——— Monstrent
* * * * * *
Quid tantùm Oceano properent se tingere soles
Hyberni; vel quæ tardis mora noctibus obstet."

——— They show
* * * * * *
Why winter-suns so rapidly descend,
And what delays the tardy nights extend.

GENTLEMEN who have outlets might contrive to make ornament subservient to utility; a pleasing eye-trap might also

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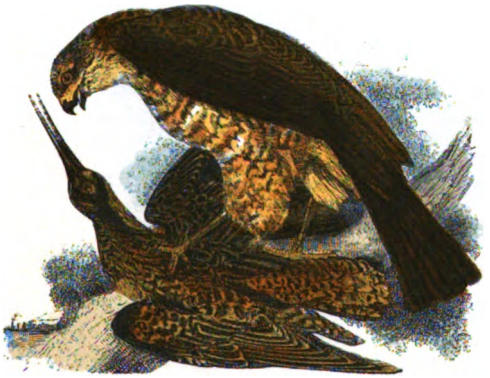

THE SPARROW-HAWK.

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contribute to promote science; an obelisk in a garden or park might be both an embellishment and an heliotrope.

Any person that is curious, and enjoys the advantage of a good horizon, might, with little trouble, make two heliotropes, the one for the winter, the other for the summer solstice; and these two erections might be constructed with very little expense; for two pieces of timber frame-work, about ten or twelve feet high, and four feet broad at the base, and close lined with plank, would answer the purpose.

The erection for the former should, if possible, be placed within sight of some window in the common sitting parlour; because men, at that dead season of the year, are usually within doors at the close of the day; while that of the latter might be fixed for any given spot in the garden or outlet, whence the owner might contemplate, in a fine summer's evening, the utmost extent that the sun makes to the northward at the season of the longest days. Now nothing would be necessary but to place these two objects with so much exactness, that the westerly limb of the sun, at setting, might but just clear the winter heliotrope to the west of it, on the shortest day, and that the whole disc of the sun, at the longest day, might exactly, at setting, also clear the summer heliotrope to the north of it.

By this simple expedient, it would soon appear that there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a solstice; for, from the shortest day, the owner would, every clear evening, see the disc advancing, at its setting, to the westward of the object; and, from the longest day, observe the sun retiring backwards every evening, at its setting, towards the object westward, till, in a few nights, it would set quite behind it, and so by degrees to the west of it; for when the sun comes near the summer solstice, the whole disc of it would at first set behind the object: after a time, the northern limb would first appear, and so every night gradually more, till at length the whole diameter would set northward of it for about three nights; but, on the middle night of the three, sensibly more remote than the former or following. When beginning its recess from the summer tropic, it would continue more and more to be hidden every night, till at length it would descend quite behind the object again; and so nightly more and more to the westward.

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## LETTER LXXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE.

"———— Mugire videbis
Sub pedibus terram, et descendere montibus ornos."

WHEN I was boy, I used to read, with astonishment and implicit assent, accounts in Baker's *Chronicle* of walking hills and travelling mountains. John Philips, in his *Cyder*, alludes to the credit that was given to such stories, with a delicate but quaint vein of humour, peculiar to the author of the *Splendid Shilling*:

"I nor adviso, nor reprehend, the choice
Of Marcley Hill; the apple no where finds
A kinder mould: yet 'tis unsafe to trust
Deceitful ground: who knows but that, once more,
This mount may journey, and, his present site
Forsaking, to thy neighbour's bounds transfer
Thy goodly plants, affording matter strange
For law debates!"

But, when I came to consider better, I began to suspect that, though our hills may never have journeyed far, yet that the ends of many of them have slipped and fallen away at distant periods, leaving the cliffs bare and abrupt. This seems to have been the case with Nore and Whetham Hills, and especially with the ridge between Harteley Park and Ward-le-ham, where the ground has slid into vast swellings and furrows, and lies still in such romantic confusion as cannot be accounted for from any other cause. A strange event, that happened not long since, justifies our suspicions; which, though it befel not within the limits of this parish, yet as it was within the hundred of Selborne, and as the circumstances were singular, may fairly claim a place in a work of this nature.

The months of January and February, in the year 1774, were remarkable for great melting snows and vast gluts of

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rain; so that, by the end of the latter month, the land-springs, or levants, began to prevail, and to be near as high as in the memorable winter of 1764. The beginning of March also went on in the same tenor, when, in the night between the 8th and 9th of that month, a considerable part of the great woody hanger at Hawkley was torn from its place, and fell down, leaving a high free-stone cliff naked and bare, and resembling the steep side of a chalk pit. It appears that this huge fragment, being, perhaps, sapped and undermined by waters, foundered, and was ingulphed, going down in a perpendicular direction; for a gate, which stood in the field on the top of the hill, after sinking with its posts for thirty or forty feet, remained in so true and upright a position, as to open and shut with great exactness, just as in its first situation. Several oaks also are still standing, and in a state of vegetation, after taking the same desperate leap. That great part of this prodigious mass was absorbed in some gulf below, is plain also from the inclining ground at the bottom of the hill, which is free and unencumbered, but would have been buried in heaps of rubbish, had the fragment parted and fallen forward. About a hundred yards from the foot of this hanging coppice, stood a cottage by the side of a lane; and two hundred yards lower, on the other side of the lane, was a farm-house, in which lived a labourer and his family; and just by, a stout new barn. The cottage was inhabited by an old woman and her son, and his wife. These people, in the evening, which was very dark and tempestuous, observed that the brick floors of their kitchens began to heave and part, and that the walls seemed to open, and the roofs to crack; but they all agree that no tremor of the ground, indicating an earthquake, was ever felt, only that the wind continued to make a most tremendous roaring in the woods and hangers. The miserable inhabitants, not daring to go to bed, remained in the utmost solicitude and confusion, expecting every moment to be buried under the ruins of their shattered edifices. When daylight came, they were at leisure to contemplate the devastations of the night. They then found that a deep rift, or chasm, had opened under their houses, and torn them, as it were, in two, and that one end of the barn had suffered in a similar manner: that a pond near the cottage had under-

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gone a strange reverse, becoming deep at the shallow end, and so *vice versa:* that many large oaks were removed out of their perpendicular, some thrown down, and some fallen into the heads of neighbouring trees; and that a gate was thrust forward, with its hedge, full six feet, so as to require a new track to be made to it. From the foot of the cliff, the general course of the ground, which is pasture, inclines in a moderate descent for half a mile, and is interspersed with some hillocks, which were rifted in every direction, as well towards the great woody hanger as from it. In the first pasture the deep clefts began, and, running across the lane and under the buildings, made such vast shelves that the road was impassable for some time; and so over to an arable field on the other side, which was strangely torn and disordered. The second pasture field, being more soft and springy, was protruded forward without many fissures in the turf, which was raised in long ridges resembling graves, lying at right angles to the motion. At the bottom of this enclosure, the soil and turf rose many feet against the bodies of some oaks that obstructed their further course, and terminated this awful commotion.

The perpendicular height of the precipice, in general, is twenty-three yards; the length of the lapse or slip, as seen from the fields below, one hundred and eighty-one: and a partial fall, concealed in the coppice, extends seventy yards more; so that the total length of this fragment that fell was two hundred and fifty-one yards. About fifty acres of land suffered from this violent convulsion; two houses were entirely destroyed; one end of a new barn was left in ruins, the walls being cracked through the very stones that composed them; a hanging coppice was changed to a naked rock; and some grass grounds and an arable field so broken and rifted by the chasms, as to be rendered for a time, neither fit for the plough, nor safe for pasturage, till considerable labour and expense had been bestowed in levelling the surface, and filling in the gaping fissures.

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## LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE.

"Resonant arbusta."

The groves resound.

THERE is a steep abrupt pasture field, interspersed with furze, close to the back of this village, well known by the name of the Short Lithe, consisting of a rocky dry soil, and inclining to the afternoon sun. This spot abounds with the *gryllus campestris*, or field-cricket;* which, though frequent in these parts, is by no means a common insect in many other counties.

As their cheerful summer cry cannot but draw the attention of a naturalist, I have gone down to examine the economy of these *grylli*, and study their mode of life; but they are so shy and cautious that it is no easy matter to get a sight of them; for, feeling a person's footsteps as he advances, they stop short in the midst of their song, and retire backward nimbly into their burrows, where they lurk till all suspicion of danger is over.

At first we attempted to dig them out with a spade, but without any great success; for either we could not get to the bottom of the hole, which often terminated under a great stone; or else in breaking up the ground, we inadvertently squeezed the poor insect to death. Out of one so bruised, we took a multitude of eggs, which were long and narrow, of a yellow colour, and covered with a very tough skin. By this accident we learned to distinguish the male from the female; the former of which is shining black, with a golden stripe across his shoulders;† the latter is more dusky, more capacious about the abdomen, and carries a long sword-shaped weapon at her tail, which probably is the

* *Acheta campestris.*—FABRICIUS.
"The vaulting grasshopper of glossy green."

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instrument with which she deposits her eggs in crannies and safe receptacles.

Where violent methods will not avail, more gentle means will often succeed; and so it proved in the present case: for, though a spade be too boisterous and rough an implement, a pliant stalk of grass, gently insinuated into the caverns, will probe their windings to the bottom, and quickly bring out the inhabitant; and thus the humane inquirer may gratify his curiosity without injuring the object of it. It is remarkable, that though these insects are furnished with long legs behind, and brawny thighs for leaping, like grasshoppers; yet when driven from their holes, they show no activity, but crawl along in a shiftless manner, so as easily to be taken: and again, though provided with a curious apparatus of wings, yet they never exert them when there seems to be the greatest occasion. The males only make that shrilling noise, perhaps out of rivalry and emulation, as is the case with many animals which exert some sprightly note during their breeding-time: it is raised by a brisk friction of one wing against the other. They are solitary beings, living singly male or female, each as it may happen; but there must be a time when the sexes have some intercourse, and then the wings may be useful, perhaps during the hours of night. When the males meet they will fight fiercely, as I found by some which I put into the crevices of a dry stone wall, where I should have been glad to have made them settle: for though they seemed distressed by being taken out of their knowledge, yet the first that got possession of the chinks, would seize on any that were obtruded upon them, with a vast row of serrated fangs. With their strong jaws, toothed like the shears of a lobster's claws, they perforate and round their curious regular cells, having no fore-claws to dig, like the mole-cricket. When taken in hand, I could not but wonder that they never offered to defend themselves, though armed with such formidable weapons. Of such herbs as grow before the mouths of their burrows, they eat indiscriminately; and on a little platform, which they make just by, they drop their dung; and never in the day-time seem to stir more than two or three inches from home. Sitting in the entrance of their caverns, they chirp all night as well as day, from the middle

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of the month of May to the middle of July; and in hot weather, when they are most vigorous, they make the hills echo; and in the still hours of darkness, may be heard to a considerable distance. In the beginning of the season, their notes are more faint and inward; but become louder as the summer advances, and so die away again by degrees.

Sounds do not always give us pleasure according to their sweetness and melody; nor do harsh sounds always displease. We are more apt to be captivated or disgusted with the associations which they promote, than with the notes themselves. Thus the shrilling of the field-cricket, though sharp and stridulous, yet marvellously delights some hearers, filling their minds with a train of summer ideas of every thing that is rural, verdurous, and joyous.

About the 10th of March, the crickets appear at the mouths of their cells, which they then open and bore, and shape very elegantly. All that ever I have seen at that season were in their pupa state, and had only the rudiments of wings lying under a skin, or coat, which must be cast before the insect can arrive at its perfect state:* from whence I should suppose that the old ones of last year do not always survive the winter. In August their holes begin to be obliterated, and the insects are seen no more till spring.

Not many summers ago, I endeavoured to transplant a colony to the terrace in my garden, by boring deep holes in the sloping turf. The new inhabitants stayed some time, and fed and sung; but wandered away by degrees, and were heard at a farther distance every morning; so that it appears that on this emergeney, they made use of their wings in attempting to return to the spot from which they were taken.

One of these crickets, when confined in a paper cage, and set in the sun, and supplied with plants moistened with water, will feed and thrive, and become so merry and loud as to be irksome in the same room where a person is sitting: if the plants are not wetted, it will die.

* We have observed that they cast these skins in April, which are then seen lying at the mouths of their holes.

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## LETTER LXXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE.

"Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth."

MILTON'S *Il Penseroso.*

DEAR SIR,—While many other insects must be sought after in fields, and woods, and waters, the *gryllus domesticus*, or house-cricket, resides altogether within our dwellings, intruding itself upon our notice whether we will or no. This species delights in new-built houses, being, like the spider, pleased with the moisture of the walls; and, besides, the softness of the mortar enables them to burrow and mine between the joints of the bricks or stones, and to open communications from one room to another. They are particularly fond of kitchens and bakers' ovens, on account of their perpetual warmth.

Tender insects that live abroad either enjoy only the short period of one summer, or else doze away the cold uncomfortable months in profound slumbers; but these, residing as it were in a torrid zone, are always alert and merry; a good Christmas fire is to them like the heats of the dog-days. Though they are frequently heard by day, yet is their natural time of motion only in the night. As soon as it grows dusk, the chirping increases, and they come running forth, and are from the size of a flea to that of their full stature. As one should suppose, from the burning atmosphere which they inhabit, they are a thirsty race, and show a great propensity for liquids, being found frequently drowned in pans of water, milk, broth, or the like. Whatever is moist they affect; and, therefore, often gnaw holes in wet woollen stockings and aprons that are hung to the fire; they are the housewife's barometer, foretelling her when it will rain; and are prognostics sometimes, she thinks, of ill or good luck; of the death of a near relation, or the approach of an absent lover. By being the constant companions of her solitary hours, they

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naturally become the objects of her superstition.* These crickets are not only very thirsty, but very voracious; for they will eat the scummings of pots, and yeast, salt, and crumbs of bread, and any kitchen offal or sweepings. In the summer we have observed them to fly, when it became dusk, out of the windows, and over the neighbouring roofs. This feat of activity accounts for the sudden manner in which they often leave their haunts, as it does for the method by which they come to houses where they were not known before. It is remarkable that many sorts of insects seem never to use their wings but when they have a mind to shift their quarters, and settle new colonies. When in the air, they move *volatu undoso*, in waves, or curves, like woodpeckers, opening and shutting their wings at every stroke, and so are always rising or sinking.

When they increase to a great degree, as they did once in the house where I am now writing, they become noisome pests, flying into the candles, and dashing into people's faces; but may be blasted and destroyed by gunpowder discharged into their crevices and crannies. In families, at such times, they are, like Pharaoh's plague of frogs, "in their bed-chambers, and upon their beds, and in their ovens, and in their kneading-troughs."† Their shrilling noise is occasioned by a brisk attrition of their wings. Cats catch hearth-crickets, and, playing with them as they do with mice, devour them. Crickets may be destroyed, like wasps, by phials half filled with beer, or any liquid, and set in their haunts; for, being always eager to drink, they will crowd in till the bottles are full.

* It is a common superstition in Dumfries-shire, that, if the crickets forsake a house which they have long inhabited, some evil will befall the family—generally the death of some member is portended. In like manner, the presence or return of this cheerful little insect is lucky, and portends some good to the family.—W. J.

† Exod. viii. 3.



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## LETTER XC.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE.

How diversified are the modes of life, not only of incongruous, but even of congenerous animals! and yet their specific distinctions are not more various than their propensities. Thus, while the field-cricket delights in sunny, dry banks, and the house-cricket rejoices amidst the glowing heat of the kitchen hearth or oven, the *gryllus gryllotalpa* (the mole-cricket*) haunts moist meadows, and frequents the sides of ponds and banks of streams, performing all its functions in a swampy, wet soil. With a pair of fore-feet, curiously adapted to the purpose, it burrows and works under ground like the mole, raising a ridge as it proceeds, but seldom throwing up hillocks.

As mole-crickets often infest gardens by the sides of canals, they are unwelcome guests to the gardener, raising up ridges in their subterraneous progress, and rendering the walks unsightly. If they take to the kitchen quarters, they occasion great damage among the plants and roots, by destroying whole beds of cabbages, young legumes, and flowers. When dug out, they seem very slow and helpless, and make no use of their wings by day; but at night they come abroad, and make long excursions, as I have been convinced by finding stragglers in a morning in improbable places. In fine weather, about the middle of April, and just at the close of day, they begin to solace themselves with a low, dull, jarring note, continued for a long time without interruption, and not unlike the chattering of the fern-owl, or goat-sucker, but more inward.

About the beginning of May they lay their eggs, as I was once an eye-witness; for a gardener, at a house where I was on a visit, happening to be mowing, on the 6th of that month, by the side of a canal, his scythe struck too deep, pared off a

* *Gryllotalpa vulgaris*, in some places where abundant, does great damage to new-y sown seed, particularly peas, beans, &c.—W. J.

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large piece of turf, and laid open to view a curious scene of domestic economy:—

> "Ingentem lato dedit ore fenestram:
> Apparet domus intus, et atria longa patescunt:
> Apparent ——————— penetralia."
>
> A yawning breach of monstrous size he made·
> The inmost house is now to sight display'd;
> The admitted light with sudden lustre falls
> On the long galleries and the splendid halls.

There were many caverns and winding passages leading to a kind of chamber, neatly smoothed and rounded, and about the size of a moderate snuff-box. Within the secret nursery were deposited near an hundred eggs, of a dirty yellow colour, and enveloped in a tough skin; but too lately excluded to contain any rudiments of young, being full of a viscous substance. The eggs lay but shallow, and within the influence of the sun, just under a little heap of fresh moved mould, like that which is raised by ants.

When mole-crickets fly, they move *cursu undoso*, rising and falling in curves, like the other species mentioned before. In different parts of the kingdom people call them fen-crickets, churr-worms, and eve-churrs, all very apposite names.

Anatomists, who have examined the intestines of these insects, astonish me with their accounts; for they say that, from the structure, position, and number of their stomachs, or maws, there seems to be good reason to suppose that this and the two former species ruminate, or chew the cud, like many quadrupeds!

## LETTER XCI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *May* 7, 1779.

IT is now more than forty years that I have paid some attention to the ornithology of this district, without being able to exhaust the subject: new occurrences still arise as long as any inquiries are kept alive.



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In the last week of last month, five of those most rare birds, too uncommon to have obtained an English name, but known to naturalists by the terms of *himantopus*, or *loripes*, and *charadrius himantopus* were shot upon the verge of Frinsham Pond, a large lake belonging to the Bishop of Winchester, and lying between Wolmer Forest and the town of Farnham, in the county of Surrey. The pond-keeper says there were three brace in the flock; but that, after he had satisfied his curiosity, he suffered the sixth to remain unmolested. One of these specimens I procured, and found the length of the legs to be so extraordinary, that, at first sight, one might have supposed the shanks had been fastened on to impose on the credulity of the beholder: they were legs in *caricatura;* and had we seen such proportions on a Chinese or Japan screen, we should have made large allowances for the fancy of the draughtsman. These birds are of the plover family, and might, with propriety, be called the stilt-plovers.* Brisson, under that idea, gives them the apposite name of *l'échasse*. My specimen, when drawn, and stuffed with pepper, weighed only four ounces and a quarter, though the naked part of the thigh measured three inches and a half, and the legs four inches and a half. Hence we may safely assert, that these birds exhibit, weight for inches, incomparably the greatest length of legs of any known bird. The flamingo, for instance, is one of the most long-legged birds, and yet it bears no manner of proportion to the himantopus; for a cock flamingo weighs, at an average, about four pounds avoirdupois; and his legs and thighs measure usually about twenty inches. But four pounds are fifteen times and a fraction more than four ounces and a quarter; and if four ounces and a quarter have eight inches of legs, four pounds must have one hundred and twenty inches and a fraction of legs, viz. somewhat more than ten feet,—such a monstrous proportion as the world never saw! If you should try the experiment in still larger birds, the disparity would still increase. It must be matter of great curiosity to see the stilt-plover move; to observe how it can wield such a length of lever with such feeble muscles as the thighs seem to be

* The stilted plover is a very rare bird in this country, and its appearance is now allowed to be quite accidental.—Ed.

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furnished with. At best, one should expect it to be but a bad walker: but what adds to the wonder is, that it has no back toe. Now, without that steady prop to support its steps, it must be liable, in speculation, to perpetual vacillations, and seldom able to preserve the true centre of gravity.

The old name of *himantopus* is taken from Pliny; and, by an awkward metaphor, implies that the legs are as slender and pliant as if cut out of a thong of leather. Neither Willughby nor Ray, in all their curious researches, either at home or abroad, ever saw this bird. Mr. Pennant never met with it in all Great Britain, but observed it often in the cabinets of the curious at Paris. Hasselquist says, that it migrates to Egypt in the autumn; and a most accurate observer of nature has assured me, that he has found it on the banks of the streams in Andalusia.

Our writers record it to have been found only twice in Great Britain. From all these relations it plainly appears, that these long-legged plovers are birds of South Europe, and rarely visit our island; and when they do, are wanderers and stragglers, and impelled to make so distant and northern an excursion, from motives or accidents, for which we are not able to account. One thing may fairly be deduced, that these birds come over to us from the Continent, since nobody can suppose that a species not noticed once in an age, and of such a remarkable make, can constantly breed unobserved in this kingdom.

## LETTER XCII.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *April* 21, 1780.

DEAR SIR,—The old Sussex tortoise, that I have mentioned to you so often, is become my property. I dug it out of its winter dormitory in March last, when it was enough awakened to express its resentments by hissing; and, packing it in a box with earth, carried it eighty miles in post-chaises. The rattle and hurry of the journey so perfectly roused it, that when I

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turned it out on a border, it walked twice down to the bottom of my garden: however, in the evening, the weather being cold, it buried itself in the loose mould, and continues still concealed.

As it will be under my eye, I shall now have an opportunity of enlarging my observations on its mode of life and propensities; and perceive already, that, towards the time of coming forth, it opens a breathing-place in the ground near its head, requiring, I conclude, a freer respiration as it becomes more alive. This creature not only goes under the earth from the middle of November to the middle of April, but sleeps great part of summer; for it goes to bed, in the longest days, at four in the afternoon, and often does not stir in the morning till late. Besides, it retires to rest for every shower, and does not move at all in wet days.*

When one reflects on the state of this strange being, it is a matter of wonder to find that Providence should bestow such a profusion of days, such a seeming waste of longevity, on a reptile that appears to relish it so little as to squander more than two-thirds of its existence in a joyless stupor, and be lost to all sensation for months together in the profoundest of slumbers.

While I was writing this letter, a moist and warm afternoon, with the thermometer at 50, brought forth troops of

* In Mr. White's unpublished MS., I find the following notices of Timothy, the tortoise, for so Mr. White called it.

"March 17th.—Brought away Mrs. Snooke's old tortoise, Timothy, which she valued very much, and had treated kindly for forty years. When dug out of its hybernaculum, it resented the insult by hissing.

"May 14th.—Timothy travelled about the garden.

"May 2nd.—Timothy eats.

"March 15th.—Timothy comes forth, and weighs 6 lb. 5½ oz.

"June 4th.—Timothy took his usual ramble, and could not be confined within the limits of the garden. His pursuits, which seem of the amorous kind, transport him beyond the bounds of his usual gravity.

"Sept. 17th.—When we call loudly through the speaking-trumpet to Timothy, he does not seem to regard the noise."

There are many other notices of Timothy, too long for insertion. He appears to have been weighed at certain times; to have been immersed in water to see if he was amphibious, and was evidently much alarmed at finding himself out of his element, and there is a humorous and entertaining letter, which Mr. White composed for him, to Miss Becky Mulso, dated from his border under the fruit wall in 1784, and signed, "Your sorrowful reptile, Timothy."—Ed.

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shell-snails; and, at the same juncture, the tortoise heaved up the mould and put out its head; and the next morning came forth, as it were raised from the dead, and walked about till four in the afternoon. This was a curious coincidence—a very amusing occurrence—to see such a similarity of feelings between two φερεοικοι,—for so the Greeks call both the shell-snail and the tortoise.

Summer birds are, this cold and backward spring, unusually late: I have seen but one swallow yet. This conformity with the weather convinces me more and more that they sleep in the winter.

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## MORE PARTICULARS RESPECTING THE OLD FAMILY TORTOISE.

BECAUSE we call this creature an abject reptile, we are too apt to undervalue his abilities, and to depreciate his powers of instinct. Yet he is, as Mr. Pope says of his lord,

"Much too wise to walk into a well;"

and has so much discernment as not to fall down an haha, but to stop and withdraw from the brink with the readiest precaution.

Though he loves warm weather, he avoids the hot sun; because his thick shell, when once heated, would, as the poet says of solid armour, "scald with safety." He therefore spends the more sultry hours under the umbrella of a large cabbage-leaf, or amidst the waving forests of an asparagus bed.

But as he avoids the heat in summer, so, in the decline of the year, he improves the faint autumnal beams by getting within the reflection of a fruit wall; and, though he never has read that planes inclining to the horizon receive a greater share of warmth,* he inclines his shell, by tilting it against the wall, to collect and admit every feeble ray.

Pitiable seems the condition of this poor embarrassed

* Several years ago a book was written entitled, "Fruit Walls improved

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reptile: to be cased in a suit of ponderous armour, which he cannot lay aside; to be imprisoned, as it were, within his own shell, must preclude, we should suppose, all activity and disposition for enterprise. Yet there is a season of the year (usually the beginning of June) when his exertions are remarkable. He then walks on tiptoe, and is stirring by five in the morning; and, traversing the garden, examines every wicket and interstice in the fences, through which he will escape if possible; and often has eluded the care of the gardener, and wandered to some distant field. The motives that impel him to undertake these rambles seem to be of the amorous kind. His fancy then becomes intent on sexual attachments, which transport him beyond his usual gravity, and induce him to forget for a time his ordinary solemn deportment.

## LETTER XCIII.

### TO THOMAS PENNANT, ESQ.

A PAIR of honey-buzzards, *buteo apivorus, sive vespivorus*, Raii, built them a large shallow nest, composed of twigs, and lined with dead beechen leaves, upon a tall slender beech near the middle of Selborne Hanger, in the summer of 1780. In the middle of the month of June, a bold boy climbed this tree, though standing on so steep and dizzy a situation, and brought down an egg, the only one in the nest, which had been set on for some time, and contained the embryo of a young bird. The egg was smaller, and not so round, as those of the common buzzard; was dotted at each end with small red spots, and surrounded in the middle with a broad bloody zone.

The hen bird was shot, and answered exactly to Mr. Ray's description of that species; had a black cere, short thick legs, and a long tail. When on the wing, this species may be

by inclining them to the horizon;" in which the author has shown, by calculation, that a much greater number of the rays of the sun will fall on such walls than on those which are perpendicular

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THE HONEY BUZZARD.

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easily distinguished from the common buzzard by its hawk-like appearance, small head, wings not so blunt, and longer tail. This specimen contained in its craw some limbs of frogs, and many grey snails without shells.* The irides of the eyes of this bird were of a beautiful bright yellow colour.

About the 10th of July, in the same summer, a pair of sparrow-hawks bred in an old crow's nest on a low beech in the same hanger; and as their brood, which was numerous, began to grow up, became so daring and ravenous, that they were a terror to all the dames in the village that had chickens or ducklings under their care. A boy climbed the tree, and found the young so fledged that they all escaped from him, but discovered that a good house had been kept. The larder was well stored with provisions; for he brought down a young blackbird, jay, and house-martin, all clean picked, and some half devoured. The old birds had been observed to make sad havoc for some days among the new-flown swallows and martins, which, being but lately out of their nests, had not acquired those powers and command of wing that enable them, when more mature, to set such enemies at defiance.

## LETTER XCIV.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Nov.* 30, 1780.

DEAR SIR,—Every incident that occasions a renewal of our correspondence will ever be pleasing and agreeable to me.

As to the wild wood-pigeon,† the *oenas* or *vinago*, of Ray, I

* They constantly feed their young with the larvæ of wasps and bees, and probably themselves when they are able to procure them. This has probably led to the idea of their eating honey. Besides frogs and snails, they will occasionally prey on birds, rabbits, &c.—ED.

† Both White and some other naturalists have written confused accounts of these pigeons. The cushat or ring-dove (*columba palumbus*) inhabits woods and makes its nest on the branches of trees.

The stock-pigeon (*C. oenas*) has a grey slaty colour, and breeds freely in holes in the old pollards in Richmond Park.

The rock-pigeon (*C. livia*) of a slaty grey, with two black bars on the wings,

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am much of your mind, and see no reason for making it the origin of the common house-dove; but suppose those that have advanced that opinion may have been misled by another appellation, often given to the *oenas*, which is that of stock-dove.

Unless the stock-dove in the winter varies greatly in manners from itself in summer, no species seems more unlikely to be domesticated, and to make a house-dove. We very rarely see the latter settle on trees at all, nor does it ever haunt the woods; but the former, as long as it stays with us, from November perhaps to February, lives the same wild life with the ring-dove (*palumbus torquatus*); frequents coppices and groves, supports itself chiefly by mast, and delights to roost in the tallest beeches. Could it be known in what manner stock-doves build, the doubt would be settled with me at once, provided they construct their nests on trees, like the ring-dove, as I much suspect they do.

You received, you say, last spring, a stock-dove from Sussex; and are informed that they sometimes breed in that county. But why did not your correspondent determine the place of its nidification, whether on rocks, cliffs, or trees? If he was not an adroit ornithologist, I should doubt the fact, because people with us perpetually confound the stock-dove with the ring-dove.

For my own part, I readily concur with you in supposing that house-doves are derived from the small blue rock-pigeon, for many reasons. In the first place, the wild stock-dove is manifestly larger than the common house-dove, against the usual rule of domestication, which generally enlarges the breed. Again, those two remarkable black spots on the remiges of each wing of the stock-dove, which are so characteristic of the species, would not, one should think, be totally lost by its being reclaimed; but would often break out among its descendants. But what is worth a hundred arguments, is the instance you give in Sir Roger Mostyn's house-doves in Carnarvonshire; which, though tempted by plenty of food and gentle treatment, can never be prevailed on to inhabit their cote for any time; but, as soon as they begin to breed,

breeds amongst rocks on the sea-coast. I have seen them in Taswell Bay near Swansea.—Ed.

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betake themselves to the fastnesses of Ormshead, and deposit their young in safety amidst the inaccessible caverns and precipices of that stupendous promontory.

"Naturam expellas furcâ . . tamen usque recurret."

Nature, expelled by force, will still return.

I have consulted a sportsman, now in his seventy-eighth year, who tells me that, fifty or sixty years back, when the beechen woods were much more extensive than at present, the number of wood-pigeons was astonishing; that he has often killed near twenty in a day; and that, with a long wild-fowl piece, he has shot seven or eight at a time on the wing, as they came wheeling over head. He moreover adds, which I was not aware of, that often there were among them little parties of small blue doves, which he calls rockiers. The food of these numberless emigrants was beech-mast and some acorns; and particularly barley, which they collected in the stubbles. But of late years, since the vast increase of turnips, that vegetable has furnished a great part of their support in hard weather; and the holes they pick in these roots greatly damage the crop. From this food their flesh has contracted a rancidness, which occasions them to be rejected by nicer judges of eating, who thought them before a delicate dish. They were shot not only as they were feeding in the fields, and especially in snowy weather, but also at the close of the evening, by men who lay in ambush among the woods and groves to kill them as they came in to roost.* These are the principal circumstances relating to this wonderful internal migration, which with us takes place towards the end of November, and ceases early in the spring. Last winter we had, in Selborne High-wood, about a hundred of these doves; but in former times the flocks were so vast, not only with us, but all the district around, that on mornings and evenings they traversed the air, like rooks, in strings,

* Some old sportsmen say, that the main part of these flocks used to withdraw as soon as the heavy Christmas frosts were over.

In the woods and coppices in some of the remote parts of Breconshire, I have seen vast flocks of the wood-pigeon. They are excellent eating before they feed on turnips.—Ed.

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reaching for a mile together. When they thus rendezvoused here by thousands, if they happened to be suddenly roused from their roost-trees on an evening,

> "Their rising all at once was like the sound
> Of thunder heard remote."

It will by no means be foreign to the present purpose to add, that I had a relation in this neighbourhood who made it a practice for a time, whenever he could procure the eggs of a ring-dove, to place them under a pair of doves that were sitting in his own pigeon-house, hoping thereby, if he could bring about a coalition, to enlarge his breed, and teach his own doves to beat out into the woods, and to support themselves by mast. The plan was plausible, but something always interrupted the success; for though the birds were usually hatched, and sometimes grew to half their size, yet none ever arrived at maturity. I myself have seen these foundlings in their nest displaying a strange ferocity of nature, so as scarcely to bear to be looked at, and snapping with their bills by way of menace. In short, they always died, perhaps for want of proper sustenance; but the owner thought that by their fierce and wild demeanour they frighted their foster-mothers, and so were starved.

Virgil, as a familiar occurrence, by way of simile, describes a dove haunting the cavern of a rock, in such engaging numbers, that I cannot refrain from quoting a passage; and John Dryden has rendered it so happily in our language, that, without further excuse, I shall add his translation also:—

> "Qualis speluncâ subitò commota columba,
> Cui domus, et dulces latebroso in pumice nidi,
> Fertur in arva volans, plausúmque exterrita pennis
> Dat tecto ingentem: mox aëre lapsa quieto
> Radit iter liquidum, celeres neque commovet alas."

> "As when the dove her rocky hold forsakes,
> Roused in a fright, her sounding wings she shakes;
> The cavern rings with clattering; out she flies,
> And leaves her callow care, and cleaves the skies.
> At first she flutters; but at length she springs
> To smoother flight, and shoots upon her wings."

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## LETTER XCV.

TO THE HON. DAINES BARRINGTON.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 12, 1771.

I HAVE now read your *Miscellanies* through with much care and satisfaction; and am to return you my best thanks for the honourable mention made in them of me as a naturalist, which I wish I may deserve.

In some former letters, I expressed my suspicions that many of the house-martins do not depart in the winter far from this village. I therefore determined to make some search about the south-east end of the hill, where I imagined they might slumber out the uncomfortable months of winter. But supposing that the examination would be made to the best advantage in the spring, and observing that no martins had appeared by the 11th of April last, on that day I employed some men to explore the shrubs and cavities of the suspected spot. The persons took pains, but without any success; however, a remarkable incident occurred in the midst of our pursuit,—while the labourers were at work, a house-martin, the first that had been seen this year, came down the village in the sight of several people, and went at once into a nest, where it stayed a short time, and then flew over the houses; for some days after, no martins were observed, not till the 16th of April, and then only a pair. Martins in general were remarkably late this year.

## LETTER XCVI.

TO THE SAME.

SELBORNE, *Sept.* 9, 1781.

I HAVE just met with a circumstance respecting swifts, which furnishes an exception to the whole tenor of my observations ever since I have bestowed any attention on that species of *hirundines*. Our swifts, in general, withdrew this year about

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the first day of August, all save one pair, which in two or three days was reduced to a single bird. The perseverance of this individual made me suspect that the strongest of motives, that of an attachment to her young, could alone occasion so late a stay. I watched, therefore, till the 24th of August, and then discovered that, under the eaves of the church, she attended upon two young, which were fledged, and now put out their white chins from a crevice. These remained till the 27th, looking more alert every day, and seeming to long to be on the wing. After this day, they were missing at once; nor could I ever observe them with with their dam coursing round the church in the act of learning to fly, as the first broods evidently do. On the 31st, I caused the eaves to be searched; but we found in the nest only two callow, dead, stinking swifts, on which a second nest had been formed. This double nest was full of the black shining cases of the *hippoboscæ hirundinis*.

The following remarks on this unusual incident are obvious. The first is, that though it may be disagreeable to swifts to remain beyond the beginning of August, yet that they can subsist longer is undeniable. The second is, that this uncommon event, as it was owing to the loss of the first brood, so it corroborates my former remark, that swifts breed regularly but once; since, was the contrary the case, the occurrence above could neither be new nor rare.

P.S. One swift was seen at Lyndon, in the county of Rutland, in 1782, so late as the 3rd of September.

## LETTER XCVII.

### TO THE SAME.

As I have sometimes known you make inquiries about several kinds of insects, I shall here send you an account of one sort which I little expected to have found in this kingdom. I had often observed that one particular part of a vine, growing on the walls of my house, was covered in the autumn with a black, dust-like appearance, on which the flies fed

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eagerly; and the shoots and leaves thus affected did not thrive, nor did the fruit ripen. To this substance I applied my glasses; but could not discover that it had anything to do with animal life, as I at first expected: but upon a closer examination behind the larger boughs, we were surprised to find that they were coated over with husky shells, from whose sides proceeded a cotton-like substance, surrounding a multitude of eggs. This curious and uncommon production put me upon recollecting what I have heard and read concerning the *cocus vitis viniferæ* of Linnæus; which, in the south of Europe, infests many vines, and is a horrid and loathsome pest.* As soon as I had turned to the accounts given of this insect, I saw at once that it swarmed on my vine; and did not appear to have been at all checked by the preceding winter, which had been uncommonly severe.

Not being then at all aware that it had anything to do with England, I was much inclined to think that it came from Gibraltar, among the many boxes and packages of plants and birds which I had formerly received from thence; and especially as the vine infested grew immediately under my study window, where I usually kept my specimens. True it is, that I had received nothing from thence for some years: but as insects, we know, are conveyed from one country to another in a very unexpected manner, and have a wonderful power of maintaining their existence till they fall into a *nidus* proper for their support and increase, I cannot but suspect still that these *cocci* came to me originally from Andalusia. Yet, all the while, candour obliges me to confess, that Mr. Lightfoot has written me word that he once, and but once, saw these insects on a vine at Weymouth, in Dorsetshire; which it is here to be observed, is a seaport town to which the *coccus* might be conveyed by shipping.

As many of my readers may possibly never have heard of this strange and unusual insect, I shall here transcribe a passage from a *Natural History of Gibraltar*, written by the Reverend John White, late Vicar of Blackburn, in Lancashire, but not yet published.

"In the year 1770, a vine, which grew on the east side of

* This insect probably injures trees by puncturing them, and thus causing a great overflowing of the sap. See Cuvier.—Ed.

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my house, and which had produced the finest crops of grapes for years past, was suddenly overspread on all the woody branches with large lumps of a white fibrous substance, resembling spiders' webs, or rather raw cotton. It was of a very clammy quality, sticking fast to everything that touched it, and capable of being spun into long threads. At first I suspected it to be the product of spiders, but could find none. Nothing was to be seen connected with it, but many brown oval husky shells, which by no means looked like insects, but rather resembled bits of the dry bark of the vine. The tree had a plentiful crop of grapes set, when this pest appeared upon it; but the fruit was manifestly injured by this foul encumbrance. It remained all the summer, still increasing, and loaded the woody and bearing branches to a vast degree. I often pulled off great quantities by handfuls; but it was so slimy and tenacious that it could by no means be cleared. The grapes never filled to their natural perfection, but turned watery and vapid Upon perusing the works afterwards of M. de Reaumur, I found this matter perfectly described and accounted for. Those husky shells which I had observed, were no other than the female *coccus*, from whose sides this cotton-like substance exudes, and serves as a covering and security for their eggs."

To this account I think proper to add, that, though the female *cocci* are stationary, and seldom remove from the place to which they stick, yet the male is a winged insect; and that the black dust which I saw was undoubtedly the excrement of the females, which is eaten by ants as well as flies. Though the utmost severity of our winter did not destroy these insects, yet the attention of the gardener, in a summer or two, has entirely relieved my vine from this filthy annoyance.

As we have remarked above, that insects are often conveyed from one country to another in a very unaccountable manner, I shall here mention an emigration of small *aphides* which was observed in the village of Selborne, no longer ago than August the 1st, 1785.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon of that day, which was very hot, the people of this village were surprised by a shower of *aphides*, or smother-flies, which fell in these parts.

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Those that were walking in the street at that juncture found themselves covered with these insects, which settled also on the hedges and gardens, blackening all the vegetables where they alighted. My annuals were discoloured with them, and the stalks of a bed of onions were quite coated over for six days after. These armies were then, no doubt, in a state of emigration, and shifting their quarters: and might have come, as we know, from the great hop plantations of Kent or Sussex, the wind being all that day in the easterly quarter. They were observed, at the same time, in great clouds, about Farnham, and all along the vale from Farnham to Alton.*

## LETTER XCVIII.

### TO THE SAME.

DEAR SIR,—When I happen to visit a family where gold and silver fishes are kept in a glass bowl, I am always pleased with the occurrence, because it offers me an opportunity of observing the actions and propensities of those beings, with whom we can be little acquainted in their natural state. Not long since, I spent a fortnight at the house of a friend, where there was such a *vivary*, to which I paid no small attention, taking every occasion to remark what passed within its narrow limits. It was here that I first observed the manner in which fishes die.† As soon as the creature sickens, the head sinks lower and lower, and it

* For various methods by which several insects shift their quarters, see DERHAM'S *Physico-Theology*.

The large excrescences we often see on the trunks and branches of oaks, elms, &c., are caused by insects. I had one of these excrescences sawn off, and placed in my sitting-room. I was surprised one morning at finding the room filled with a vast number of very small flies, and seeing some crawling out of the piece of wood. On cutting it through I found an infinite number of cells, some with maggots in them, and others with perfectly formed flies ready to emerge.—ED.

† When fish have been hurt or bruised, a white matter forms over the wound, which spreads, and they die as Mr. White has described.—ED.



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stands, as it were, on its head; till, getting weaker, and losing all poise, the tail turns over, and, at last, it floats on the surface of the water, with its belly uppermost. The reason why fishes, when dead, swim in that manner, is very obvious; because, when the body is no longer balanced by the fins of the belly, the broad muscular back preponderates by its own gravity, and turns the belly uppermost, as lighter, from its being a cavity, and because it contains the swimming bladders, which contribute to render it buoyant. Some that delight in gold and silver fishes, have adopted a notion that they need no aliment. True it is, that they will subsist for a long time without any apparent food but what they can collect from pure water frequently changed; yet they must draw some support from animalcula, and other nourishment supplied by the water; because, though they seem to eat nothing, yet the consequences of eating often drop from them.* That they are best pleased with such *jejune* diet may easily be confuted, since, if you toss them crumbs, they will seize them with great readiness, not to say greediness: however, bread should be given sparingly, lest, turning sour, it corrupt the water. They will also feed on the water-plant called *lemna* (duck's meat), and also on small fry.

When they want to move a little, they gently protrude themselves with their *pinnæ pectorales;* but it is with their strong muscular tails only that they, and all fishes, shoot along with such inconceivable rapidity. It has been said, that the eyes of fishes are immoveable; but these apparently turn them forward or backward, in their sockets, as their occasions require. They take little notice of a lighted candle, though applied close to their heads, but flounce, and seem much frightened, by a sudden stroke of the hand against the support whereon the bowl is hung; especially when they have been motionless, and are perhaps asleep. As fishes have no eyelids, it is not easy to discern when

* The gold fish in the fountain in Hampton Court Gardens eat a large quantity of food, especially of potatoes well boiled and broken very small. They are also much fed by the public with biscuit, bread, &c. They are very healthy, and grow to a large size. They feed on each other's spawn, and also make darts at the mud, and thus disturb aquatic insects on which they feed. I am convinced that they hear, from many experiments I have tried in order to ascertain the fact.—Ed.

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they are sleeping or not, because their eyes are always open.

Nothing can be more amusing than a glass bowl containing such fishes: the double refractions of the glass and water represent them, when moving, in a shifting and changeable variety of dimensions, shades, and colours; while the two mediums, assisted by the convaco-convex shape of the vessel, magnify and distort them vastly; not to mention that the introduction of another element and its inhabitants into our parlours engages the fancy in a very agreeable manner.

Gold and silver fishes, though originally natives of China and Japan, yet are become so well reconciled to our climate, as to thrive and multiply very fast in our ponds and stews. Linnæus ranks this species of fish under the genus of *cyprinus*, or carp, and calls it *cyprinus auratus*.

Some people exhibit this sort of fish in a very fanciful way; for they cause a glass bowl to be blown with a large hollow space within, that does not communicate with it. In this cavity they put a bird occasionally, so that you may see a goldfinch or a linnet hopping, as it were, in the midst of the water, and the fishes swimming in a circle round it. The simple exhibition of the fishes is agreeable and pleasant; but in so complicated a way becomes whimsical and unnatural, and liable to the objection due to him,

"Qui variare cupit rem prodigialitèr unam."

Who loves to vary every single thing
Prodigiously.

## LETTER XCIX.

TO THE SAME.

*October* 10, 1781.

DEAR SIR,—I think I have observed before, that much the most considerable part of the house-martins withdraw from hence about the first week in October; but that some, the latter broods, I am now convinced, linger on till the middle



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of that month; and that, at times, once perhaps in two or three years, a flight, for one day only, has shown itself in the first week in November.

Having taken notice, in October, 1780, that the last flight was numerous, amounting perhaps to one hundred and fifty, and that the season was soft and still, I resolved to pay uncommon attention to these late birds, to find, if possible, where they roosted, and to determine the precise time of their retreat. The mode of life of the latter *hirundines* is very favourable to such a design, for they spend the whole day in the sheltered district between me and the Hanger, sailing about in a placid, easy manner, and feasting on those insects which love to haunt a spot so secure from ruffling winds. As my principal object was to discover the place of their roosting, I took care to wait on them before they retired to rest, and was much pleased to find that, for several evenings together, just at a quarter past five in the afternoon, they all scudded away in great haste towards the south-east, and darted down among the low shrubs above the cottages at the end of the hill. This spot, in many respects, seems to be well calculated for their winter residence, for, in many parts, it is as steep as the roof of any house, and, therefore, secure from the annoyances of water; and it is, moreover, clothed with beechen shrubs, which, being stunted and bitten by sheep, make the thickest covert imaginable, and are so entangled as to be impervious to the smallest spaniel; besides, it is the nature of underwood beech never to cast its leaf all the winter, so that, with the leaves on the ground and those on the twigs, no shelter can be more complete. I watched them on to the thirteenth and fourteenth of October, and found their evening retreat was exact and uniform; but after this they made no regular appearance. Now and then a straggler was seen; and, on the twenty-second of October, I observed two, in the morning, over the village, and with them my remarks for the season ended.

From all these circumstances put together, it is more than probable that this lingering flight, at so late a season of the year, never departed from the island.* Had they indulged me that autumn with a November visit, as I much desired,

* There may be solitary instances of martins, &c., hybernating in this country

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I presume that, with proper assistants, I should have settled the matter past all doubt; but though the third of November was a sweet day, and, in appearance, exactly suited to my wishes, yet not a martin was to be seen, and so I was forced, reluctantly, to give up the pursuit.

I have only to add, that were the bushes, which cover some acres, and are not my own property, to be grubbed and carefully examined, probably those late broods, and perhaps the whole aggregate body of the house-martins of this district, might be found there, in different secret dormitories; and that, so far from withdrawing into warmer climes, it would appear that they never depart three hundred yards from the village.

## LETTER C.

### TO THE SAME.

THEY who write on natural history, cannot too frequently advert to instinct, that wonderful limited faculty, which, in some instances, raises the brute creation, as it were, above reason, and in others, leaves them so far below it. Philosophers have defined instinct to be that secret influence by which every species is impelled naturally to pursue, at all times, the same way, or track, without any teaching or example; whereas reason, without instruction, would often vary, and do that by any methods which instinct effects by one alone. Now, this maxim must be taken in a qualified sense, for there are instances in which instinct does vary and conform to the circumstances of place and convenience.

It has been remarked, that every species of bird has a mode of nidification peculiar to itself,* so that a schoolboy

from peculiar causes, but no proof has yet been brought forward that they do so generally.—ED.

* Birds certainly alter their mode of nidification for peculiar purposes, especially for concealing the nest more effectually. I have observed instances of this with respect to the wren and fly-catcher.—ED.

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would at once pronounce on the sort of nest before him. This is the case among fields, and woods, and wilds; but, in the villages round London, where mosses, and gossamer and cotton from vegetables, are hardly to be found, the nest of the chaffinch has not that elegant finished appearance, nor is it so beautifully studded with lichens as in a more rural district; and the wren is obliged to construct its house with straws and dry grasses, which do not give it that rotundity and compactness so remarkable in the edifices of that little architect. Again, the regular nest of the house-martin is hemispheric; but where a rafter or a joist, or a cornice, may happen to stand in the way, the nest is so contrived as to conform to the obstruction, and becomes flat, or oval, or compressed.*

In the following instances, instinct is perfectly uniform and consistent. There are three creatures—the squirrel, the field-mouse and the nut-hatch (*sitta europæa*), which live much on hazel-nuts, and yet they open them each in a different way. The first, after rasping off the small end, splits the shell into two with his long fore-teeth, as a man does with his knife; the second nibbles a hole with his teeth, so regular as if drilled with a wimble, and yet so small that one would wonder how the kernel can be extracted through it; while the last picks an irregular ragged hole with its bill; but as this artist has no paws to hold the nut firm while he pierces it, like an adroit workman, he fixes it as it were, in a vice, in some cleft of a tree, or in some crevice, when, standing over it, he perforates the stubborn shell. We have often placed nuts in the chink of a gate-post, where nut-hatches have been known to haunt, and have always found that those birds have readily penetrated them. While at work they make a rapping noise that may be heard at a considerable distance.

You that understand both the theory and practical part of music, may best inform us why harmony or melody should so strangely affect some men, as it were, by recollection, for

* "Each creature has a wisdom for its good:
The pigeons feed their tender offspring, crying,
When they are callow, but withdraw their food
When they are fledge, that need may teach them flying."—HERBERT.

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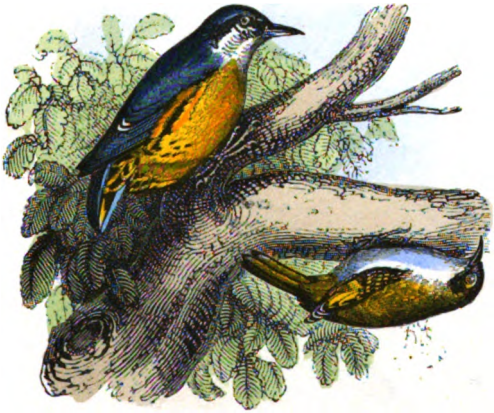

THE NUTHATCH.

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days after a concert is over. What I mean, the following passage will most readily explain :—

"Præhabebat porrò vocibus humanis, instrumentisque harmonicis, musicam illam avium: non quod aliâ quoque non delectaretur; sed quod ex musicâ humanâ relinqueretur in animo continens quædam, attentionemque et somnum conturbans agitatio: dum ascensus, exscensus, tenores, ac mutationes illæ sonorum et consonantiarum, euntque, redeuntque per phantasiam :—cum nihil tale relinqui possit ex modulationibus avium, quæ, quod non sunt perinde a nobis imitabiles, non possunt perinde internam facultatem commovere."—GASSENDUS, *in Vitâ Peireskii*.—"He preferred, also, the music of birds to vocal and instrumental harmony; not that he did not take pleasure in any other, but because there was left in the mind some constant agitation, disturbing the sleep and the attention, whilst the several variations of sound and concord go and return through the imagination, when no such effect can be produced by the modulation of birds, because, as they are not equally imitable by us, they cannot equally excite the internal faculty."

This curious quotation strikes me much by so well representing my own case, and by describing what I have so often felt, but never could so well express. When I hear fine music, I am haunted with passages therefrom night and day; and especially at first waking, which, by their importunity, give more uneasiness than pleasure: elegant lessons still teaze my imagination, and recur irresistibly to my recollection at seasons, and even when I am desirous of thinking of more serious matters.

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## LETTER CI.

### TO THE SAME.

A RARE, and I think a new, little bird* frequents my garden, which, I have great reason to think, is the petti-chaps: it is common in some parts of the kingdom; and I have received formerly several dead specimens from Gibraltar. This bird much resembles the white-throat, but has a more white, or rather silvery, breast and belly; is restless and active like the willow-wrens, and hops from bough to bough, examining every part for food: it also runs up the stems of the crown imperials, and putting its head into the bells of those flowers, sips the liquor which stands in the nectarium of each petal. Sometimes it feeds on the ground like the hedge-sparrow, by hopping about on the grass-plots and mown walks.

One of my neighbours, an intelligent and observing man, informs me, that in the beginning of May, and about ten minutes before eight o'clock in the evening, he discovered a great cluster of house-swallows, thirty, at least, he supposes, perching on a willow that hung over the verge of James Knight's upper pond.† His attention was first drawn by the twittering of these birds, which sat motionless in a row on the bough, with their heads all one way, and, by their weight pressing down the twig, so that it nearly touched the

* Mr. Herbert says that this kind of bird certainly was not the pettichaps, which has not the manners Mr. White describes. The detail exactly answers to the blue-grey, or lesser white-throat (*sylvia silviella*).

† Spallanzani says, very decidedly, that swallows retire under water at the time of their disappearance from this country; but acknowledges that he had never himself observed it, though his belief of the fact seemed certain. He had performed a variety of experiments to resolve the question, if cold would have the effect of producing torpidity, and confined swallows in different ways under snow and ice, and in an ice-house. The result, however, was always death, when the temperature and period of immersion were prolonged beyond a certain period; and the conclusion he draws is, that, at least, our species of *hirundinidæ* do not become torpid.—W. J.

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water. In this situation he watched them till he could see no longer. Repeated accounts of this sort, spring and fall, induce us greatly to suspect, that house-swallows have some strong attachment to water, independent of the matter of food; and, though they may not retire into that element, yet they may conceal themselves in the banks of pools and rivers during the uncomfortable months of winter.

One of the keepers of Wolmer Forest sent me a peregrine falcon, which he shot on the verge of that district, as it was devouring a wood-pigeon. The *falco peregrinus*, or haggard falcon, is a noble species of hawk, seldom seen in the southern counties. In winter 1767, one was killed in the neighbouring parish of Faringdon, and sent by me to Mr. Pennant into North Wales.* Since that time, I have met with none till now. The specimen mentioned above was in preservation, and not injured by the shot: it measured forty-two inches from wing to wing, and twenty-one from beak to tail, and weighed two pounds and a half standing weight. This species is very robust, and wonderfully formed for rapine: its breast was plump and muscular; its thighs long, thick and brawny; and its legs remarkably short and well-set: the feet were armed with most formidable, sharp, long talons: the eyelids and cere of the bill were yellow; but the irides of the eyes dusky: the beak was thick and hooked, and of a dark colour, and had a jagged process near the end of the upper mandible on each side: its tail, or train, was short in proportion to the bulk of its body; yet the wings, when closed, did not extend to the end of the train. From its large and fair proportions, it might be supposed to have been a female; but I was not permitted to cut open the specimen. For one of the birds of prey, which are usually lean, this was in high case: in its craw were many barley-corns, which probably came from the crop of the wood-pigeon, on which it was feeding when shot: for voracious birds do not eat grain; but, when devouring their quarry, with undistinguishing vehemence, swallow bones and feathers, and all matters, indiscriminately.† This falcon was probably

* See Letters x. and xi. to Thomas Pennant, Esq.

† The bones and feathers are swallowed naturally, and assist to promote the digestion. The Abbe Spallanzani, in his experiments on various birds and

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driven from the mountains of North Wales or Scotland, where they are known to breed, by rigorous weather and deep snows that had lately fallen.

## LETTER CII.

### TO THE SAME.

My near neighbour, a young gentleman in the service of the East India Company, has brought home a dog and a bitch of the Chinese breed from Canton; such as are fattened in that country for the purpose of being eaten. They are about the size of a moderate spaniel; of a pale yellow colour, with coarse bristling hair on their backs; sharp upright ears, and peaked heads, which give them a very fox-like appearance. Their hind legs are unusually straight, without any bend at the hock, or ham; to such a degree as to give them an awkward gait when they trot. When they are in motion, their tails are curved high over their backs like those of some hounds, and have a bare place each on the outside from the tip midway, that does not seem to be matter of accident, but somewhat singular. Their eyes are jet-black, small, and piercing; the insides of their lips and mouths of the same colour, and their tongues blue. The bitch has a dew-claw on each hind leg; the dog has none. When taken out into a field, the bitch showed some disposition for hunting, and dwelt on the scent of a covey of partridges till she sprung them, giving her tongue all the time. The dogs in South America are dumb; but these bark much in a short thick manner, like foxes, and have a surly, savage demeanour, like their ancestors, which are not domesticated, but bred up in sties, where they are fed for the table with rice-meal and other farinaceous food. These dogs, having been taken on

animals, by changing gradually their food, at last brought some of the falcons to live on a vegetable diet; and, as a reverse, fed a pigeon upon animal substances—proving that, by degrees, the natural food of an animal may be changed, for a time at least, without harm.—W. J.

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board as soon as weaned, could not learn much from their dam; yet they did not relish flesh when they came to England. In the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the dogs are bred up on vegetables, and would not eat flesh when offered them by our circumnavigators.

We believe that all dogs, in a state of nature, have sharp, upright, fox-like ears; and that hanging ears, which are esteemed so graceful, are the effect of choice breeding and cultivation. Thus, in the Travels of Ysbrandt Ides from Muscovy to China, the dogs which draw the Tartars on snow-sledges near the river Oby, are engraved with prick-ears, like those from Canton. The Kamschatdales also train the same sort of sharp-eared, peak-nosed dogs to draw their sledges; as may be seen in an elegant print engraved for Captain Cook's last voyage round the world.

Now we are upon the subject of dogs, it may not be impertinent to add, that spaniels, as all sportsmen know, though they hunt partridges and pheasants as it were by instinct, and with much delight and alacrity, yet will hardly touch their bones when offered as food; nor will a mongrel dog of my own, though he is remarkable for finding that sort of game. But when we came to offer the bones of partridges to the two Chinese dogs, they devoured them with much greediness, and licked the platter clean.

No sporting dogs will flush woodcocks till inured to the scent, and trained to the sport, which they then pursue with vehemence and transport; but then they will not touch their bones, but turn from them with abhorrence, even when they are hungry.

Now, that dogs should not be fond of the bones of such birds as they are not disposed to hunt, is no wonder; but why they reject and do not care to eat their natural game, is not so easily accounted for, since the end of hunting seems to be, that the chase pursued should be eaten. Dogs, again, will not devour the more rancid water-fowls; nor indeed the bones of any wild-fowls; nor will they touch the fetid bodies of birds that feed on offal and garbage; and indeed there may be somewhat of providential instinct in this circumstance of dislike; for vultures,* and kites, and ravens, and crows, &c.,

* Hasselquist, in his *Travels to the Levant*, observes, that the dogs and

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were intended to be messmates with dogs over their carrion; and seem to be appointed by Nature as fellow-scavengers, to remove all cadaverous substances from the face of the earth.*

vultures at Grand Cairo maintain such a friendly intercourse, as to bring up their young together in the same place.

* See some very interesting observations on the natural history and origin of our domestic race of dogs, in the fifth number of the *Journal of Agriculture*, by Mr. J. Wilson. The origin of all our domestic breeds is there traced to the wolf and jackal; allowing, of course, the native dogs of Africa and America, with the New Holland *Dingo*, to be distinct species.—W. J.

The Chinese word for a dog, to a European ear, sounds like *quihloh*.

While on the subject of dogs I may mention, notwithstanding Sir W. Jardine's note at the end of this letter, that the dog is of a breed distinct from either the fox, the wolf, or the jackal, and has also propensities distinct from the wild-dog, which is just as much a native of the wilderness as the lion or tiger. Sir John Sebright's offspring of a wild-dog caught in Australia, and which was born on board a ship, never could be tamed, and never showed the least affection for any particular person, although Sir John kept it constantly in his room for nearly a year. While the dog, on the contrary, shows the utmost affection for his master; he guards property with the strictest vigilance, his courage is unbounded—a courage which neither the wolf, the fox, or the wild-dog possesses—he never forgets a kindness, but soon loses recollection of an injury; his habits are social, and his fidelity not to be shaken—hunger cannot weaken, or old age impair it—if he commits a fault, he is sensible of it, and shows pleasure when commended. These qualities are distinct from those of the animals mentioned. In fact the dog appears to have been a precious gift to man by a benevolent Creator, to become his friend, companion, and protector. While all other animals have the fear and dread of man implanted in them (see Genesis, ix. 2) the poor dog alone looks at his master with affection, and the tie once formed is never broken. Again,—the wolf has oblique eyes, while the eyes of dogs have never been observed to be in that position. If the dog descended from the wolf, a constant tendency would have been observed in the former to revert to the original type or species. This is a law in all other cross breeds; but amidst the variety of dogs, this tendency has not existed. We have besides no proof that the breed between the dog, the wolf, the fox, and jackall, is continuous. The domestic dog, besides, has its peculiar bark, perfectly distinct from the three latter animals. In the most ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, also, we find representations of dogs with all the characteristic appearance and gallant bearing of our English fox-hounds. Other facts might be brought forward, but perhaps enough has been said to show that the domestic dog may be considered as a distinct breed, although some may suppose that its origin is lost in antiquity.—Ed.

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## LETTER CIII.

### TO THE SAME.

THE fossil wood * buried in the bogs of Wolmer Forest, is not yet all exhausted; for the peat-cutters now and then stumble upon a log. I have just seen a piece which was sent by a labourer of Oakhanger to a carpenter of this village. This was the butt-end of a small oak, about five feet long, and about five inches in diameter. It had apparently been severed from the ground by an axe, was very ponderous, and as black as ebony. Upon asking the carpenter for what purpose he had procured it, he told me that it was to be sent to his brother, a joiner at Farnham, who was to make use of it in cabinet work, by inlaying it along with whiter woods.

Those that are much abroad on evenings after it is dark, in spring and summer, frequently hear a nocturnal bird passing by on the wing, and repeating often a short quick note. This bird I have remarked myself, but never could make it out till lately. I am assured now that it is the stone-curlew (*charadrius oedicnemus*.) Some of them pass over or near my house almost every evening after it is dark, from the uplands of the hill and Northfield, away down towards Dorton; where, among the streams and meadows, they find a greater plenty of food. Birds that fly by night are obliged to be noisy; their notes, often repeated, become signals or watch-words to keep them together, that they may not stray or lose each other in the dark.

The evening proceedings and manœuvres of the rooks are curious and amusing in the autumn.† Just before dusk, they

* I have a snuff-box in my possession which once belonged to Sir Walter Scott, with the following inscription on it:—"Made from oak found near Gordon Castle, twenty feet below the surface of the ground." It is approaching the appearance of agate.—ED.

† It is always pleasing to read Mr. White's notices of the habits of animals, which are at the same time equally accurate and instructive, and those of the

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return in long strings from the foraging of the day, and rendezvous by thousands over Selborne-down, where they wheel round in the air, and sport and dive in a playful manner, all the while exerting their voices, and making a loud cawing, which, being blended and softened by the distance that we at the village are below them, become a confused noise or chiding, or rather a pleasing murmur, very engaging to the imagination, and not unlike the cry of a pack of hounds in hollow echoing woods, or the rushing of the wind in tall trees, or the tumbling of the tide upon a pebbly shore. When this ceremony is over, with the last gleam of day, they retire for the night to the deep beechen woods of Tisted and Ropley. We remember a little girl, who, as she was going to bed, used to remark on such an occurrence, in the true spirit of physico-theology, that the rooks were saying their prayers; and yet this child was much too young to be aware that the Scriptures have said of the Deity, that "he feedeth the ravens who call upon him."

## LETTER CIV.

TO THE SAME.

In reading Dr. Huxham's *Observationes de Aëre*, written at Plymouth, I find, by those curious and accurate remarks, which contain an account of the weather from the year 1727 to the year 1748, inclusive, that though there is frequent rain in that district of Devonshire, yet the quantity falling is not great; and that some years it has been very small; for in 1731, the rain measured only 17·266 inches, and in 1741,

rooks, more especially, have not escaped the notice of poets both ancient and modern:—

"The sable tenants of five hundred years,
That on the high tops of yon ancient elms,
Pour their hoarse music on the lonely ear."—J. H. Jesse.

Virgil also, like Mr. White, noticed the noise rooks make on returning in the evening from feeding:—

"Et è pastu decedens agmine magno
Corvorum increpuit densis exercitus alis."

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20·354; and again, in 1743, only 20·908. Places near the sea have frequent scuds, that keep the atmosphere moist, yet do not reach far up into the country: making thus the maritime situations appear wet, when the rain is not considerable. In the wettest years at Plymouth, the doctor measured only once 36; and again once, viz. in 1734, 37·114; a quantity of rain that has twice been exceeded at Selborne in the short period of my observations. Dr. Huxham remarks, that frequent small rains keep the air moist; while heavy ones render it more dry, by beating down the vapours. He is also of opinion, that the dingy smoky appearance in the sky, in very dry seasons, arises from the want of moisture sufficient to let the light through, and render the atmosphere transparent; because he had observed several bodies more diaphanous when wet than dry; and did never recollect that the air had that look in rainy seasons.

My friend, who lives just beyond the top of the down, brought his three swivel guns to try them in my outlet, with their muzzles towards the Hanger, supposing that the report would have had a great effect; but the experiment did not answer his expectation. He then removed them to the alcove on the Hanger, when the sound, rushing along the Lythe and Comb-wood, was very grand; but it was at the Hermitage that the echoes and repercussions delighted the hearers; not only filling the Lythe with the roar, as if all the beeches were tearing up by the roots, but, turning to the left, they pervaded the vale above Comb-wood ponds; and, after a pause, seemed to take up the crash again, and to extend round Harteley Hangers, and to die away at last among the coppices and coverts of Ward-le-ham. It has been remarked before, that this district is an *Anathoth*, a place of responses, or echoes, and, therefore, proper for such experiments. We may further add, that the pauses in echoes, when they cease, and yet are taken up again, like the pauses in music, surprise the hearers, and have a fine effect on the imagination.

The gentleman above mentioned has just fixed a barometer in his parlour at Newton Valence. The tube was first filled here (at Selborne), twice with care, when the mercury agreed, and stood exactly with my own; but being filled again twice at Newton, the mercury stood, on account of the great elevation of that house, three-tenths of an inch lower than the

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barometers at this village, and so continues to do, be the weight of the atmosphere what it may. The plate of the barometer at Newton is figured as low as 27; because, in stormy weather, the mercury there will sometimes descend below 28. We have supposed Newton House to stand two hundred feet higher than this house; but if the rule holds good, which says that mercury in a barometer sinks one-tenth of an inch for every hundred feet elevation, then the Newton barometer, by standing three-tenths lower than that of Selborne, proves that Newton House must be three hundred feet higher than that in which I am writing, instead of two hundred.

It may not be impertinent to add, that the barometers at Selborne stand three-tenths of an inch lower than the barometers at South Lambeth; whence we may conclude, that the former place is about three hundred feet higher than the latter; and with good reason, because the streams that rise with us run into the Thames at Weybridge, and so to London. Of course, therefore, there must be lower ground all the way from Selborne to South Lambeth; the distance between which, all the windings and indentings of the streams considered, cannot be less than a hundred miles.

## LETTER CV.

### TO THE SAME.

SINCE the weather of a district is undoubtedly part of its natural history, I shall make no farther apology for the four following letters, which will contain many particulars concerning some of the great frosts, and a few respecting some very hot summers, that have distinguished themselves from the rest during the course of my observations.

As the frost in January, 1768, was, for the small time it lasted, the most severe that we had then known for many years, and was remarkably injurious to evergreens, some account of its rigour, and reason of its ravages, may be useful,

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and not unacceptable to persons that delight in planting and ornamenting: and may particularly become a work that professes never to lose sight of utility.

For the last two or three days of the former year, there were considerable falls of snow, which lay deep and uniform on the ground without any drifting, wrapping up the more humble vegetation in perfect security. From the first day to the fifth of the new year, more snow succeeded; but, from that day, the air became entirely clear, and the heat of the sun about noon had a considerable influence in sheltered situations.

It was in such an aspect, that the snow on the author's evergreens was melted every day, and frozen intensely every night;* so that the laurustines, bays, laurels, and arbutuses, looked, in three or four days, as if they had been burnt in the fire; while a neighbour's plantation of the same kind, in a high, cold situation, where the snow was never melted at all, remained uninjured.

From hence I would infer, that it is the repeated melting and freezing of the snow that is so fatal to vegetation, rather than the severity of the cold. Therefore, it highly behoves every planter, who wishes to escape the cruel mortification of losing, in a few days, the labour and hopes of years, to bestir himself on such emergencies; and, if his plantations are small, to avail himself of mats, cloths, peas-haum, straw, reeds, or any such covering, for a short time; or, if his shrubberies are extensive, to see that his people go about with prongs and forks, and carefully dislodge the snow from the boughs; since the naked foliage will shift much better for itself, than where the snow is partly melted and frozen again.

It may perhaps appear, at first, like a paradox; but doubtless the more tender trees and shrubs should never be planted in hot aspects: not only for the reason assigned above, but also because, thus circumstanced, they are disposed

* This was the case a few years ago, when laurels, laurustines, &c., were killed to the ground in the more sheltered situations, while those in bleak, exposed situations escaped. Tender plants have more chance of surviving frost when in cold spots, than when in those more sheltered. The sap is kept back, and of course the plants are not so likely to be affected by the frosts.—Ed.



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to shoot earlier in the spring, and to grow on later in the autumn than they would otherwise do, and so are sufferers by lagging or early frosts. For this reason, also, plants from Siberia will hardly endure our climate; because, on the very first advances of spring, they shoot away, and so are cut off by the severe nights of March or April.

Dr. Fothergill and others have experienced the same inconvenience with respect to the more tender shrubs from North America; which, they, therefore, plant under north walls. There should also, perhaps, be a wall to the east, to defend them from the piercing blasts from that quarter.

This observation might, without any impropriety, be carried into animal life; for discerning bee-masters now find that their hives should not, in the winter, be exposed to the hot sun, because such unseasonable warmth awakens the inhabitants too early from their slumbers; and, by putting their juices into motion too soon, subjects them afterwards to inconveniences when rigorous weather returns.

The coincidents attending this short but intense frost were, that the horses fell sick with an epidemic distemper, which injured the winds of many, and killed some: that colds and coughs were general among the human species; that it froze under people's beds for several nights; that meat was so hard frozen that it could not be spitted, and could not be secured but in cellars; that several redwings and thrushes were killed by the frost; and that the large titmouse continued to pull straws lengthwise from the eaves of thatched houses and barns in a most adroit manner, for a purpose that has been explained already.*

On the third of January, Benjamin Martin's thermometer, within doors, in a close parlour where there was no fire, fell in the night to 20, and on the fourth to 18, and on the seventeenth to 17¼, a degree of cold which the owner never since saw in the same situation; and he regrets much that he was not able, at that juncture, to attend his instrument abroad. All this time the wind continued north and north-east; and yet on the eighth, roost-cocks, which had been silent, began to sound their clarions, and crows to clamour, as prognostic

* See Letter LXIII. to Thomas Pennant, Esq.

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of milder weather; and, moreover, moles began to heave and work, and a manifest thaw took place. From the latter circumstance, we may conclude, that thaws often originate under ground from warm vapours which arise, else how should subterraneous animals receive such early intimations of their approach? Moreover, we have often observed that cold seems to descend from above: for when a thermometer hangs abroad in a frosty night, the intervention of a cloud shall immediately raise the mercury ten degrees; and a clear sky shall again compel it to descend to its former gauge.

And here it may be proper to observe, on what has been said above, that though frosts advance to their utmost severity by somewhat of a regular gradation, yet thaws do not usually come on by as regular a declension of cold; but often take place immediately from intense freezing; as men in sickness often mend at once from paroxysm.

To the great credit of Portugal laurels and American junipers, be it remembered, that they remained untouched amidst the general havoc: hence men should learn to ornament chiefly with such trees as are able to withstand accidental severities, and not subject themselves to the vexation of a loss which may befal them once, perhaps, in ten years, yet may hardly be recovered through the whole course of their lives.

As it appeared afterwards, the ilexes were much injured, the cypresses were half destroyed, the arbutuses lingered on, but never recovered; and the bays, laurustines, and laurels, were killed to the ground! and the very wild hollies, in hot aspects, were so much affected, that they cast all their leaves.

By the fourteenth of January, the snow was entirely gone; the turnips emerged, not damaged at all, save in sunny places: the wheat looked delicately; and the garden plants were well preserved; for snow is the most kindly mantle that infant vegetation can be wrapped in: were it not for that friendly meteor, no vegetable life could exist at all in northerly regions. Yet in Sweden, the earth in April is not divested of snow for more than a fortnight, before the face of the country is covered with flowers.



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## LETTER CVI.

### TO THE SAME.

THERE were some circumstances attending the remarkable frost of January, 1776, so singular and striking, that a short detail of them may not be unacceptable.

The most certain way to be exact, will be to copy the passages from my journal, which were taken from time to time, as things occurred. But it may be proper previously to remark, that the first week in January was uncommonly wet, and drowned with vast rains from every quarter: from whence may be inferred, as there is great reason to believe is the case, that intense frosts seldom take place till the earth is completely glutted and chilled with water*; and hence dry autumns are seldom followed by rigorous winters.

January 7th.—Snow driving all the day, which was followed by frost, sleet, and some snow, till the twelfth, when a prodigious mass overwhelmed all the works of men, drifting over the tops of the gates, and filling the hollow lanes.

On the fourteenth, the writer was obliged to be much abroad: and thinks he never before, or since, has encountered such rugged Siberian weather. Many of the narrow roads are now filled above the tops of the hedges; through which the snow was driven in most romantic and grotesque shapes, so striking to the imagination, as not to be seen without wonder and pleasure. The poultry dared not to stir out of their roosting-places; for cocks and hens are so dazzled and confounded by the glare of the snow, that they would soon perish without assistance. The hares also lay sullenly in their seats, and would not move till compelled by hunger; being conscious, poor animals, that the drifts and

* The autumn preceding January, 1768, was very wet, and particularly the month of September, during which there fell at Lyndon, in the county of Rutland, six inches and a half of rain. And the terrible long frost in 1739-40, set in after a rainy season, and when the springs were very high.

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heaps treacherously betray their footsteps, and prove fatal to numbers of them.

Fram the fourteenth, the snow continued to increase, and began to stop the road-waggons and coaches, which could no longer keep on their regular stages; and especially on the western roads, where the fall appears to have been greater than in the south. The company at Bath, that wanted to attend the Queen's birth-day, were strangely incommoded; many carriages of persons who got, in their way to town from Bath, as far as Marlborough, after strange embarrassments, here met with a *ne plus ultra*. The ladies fretted, and offered large rewards to labourers if they would shovel them a track to London; but the relentless heaps of snow were too bulky to be removed; and so the eighteenth passed over, leaving the company in very uncomfortable circumstances at the Castle and other inns.

On the twentieth, the sun shone out for the first time since the frost began; a circumstance that has been remarked before, much in favour of vegetation. All this time the cold was not very intense, for the thermometer stood at 29, 28, 25, and thereabout: but on the twenty-first it descended to 20. The birds now began to be in a very pitiable and starving condition. Tamed by the season, sky-larks settled in the streets of towns, because they saw the ground was bare; rooks frequented dunghills close to houses; and crows watched horses as they passed, and greedily devoured what dropped from them; hares now came into men's gardens, and scraping away the snow, devoured such plants as they could find.

On the twenty-second, the author had occasion to go to London: through a sort of Laplandian scene very wild and grotesque indeed. But the metropolis itself exhibited a still more singular appearance than the country; for, being bedded deep in snow, the pavement could not be touched by the wheels or the horses' feet, so that the carriages ran about without the least noise. Such an exemption from din and clatter was strange, but not pleasant; it seemed to convey an uncomfortable idea of desolation:—

"Ipsa silentia terrent."

On the twenty-seventh, much snow fell all day, and in the

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evening the frost became very intense. At South Lambeth, for the four following nights, the thermometer fell to 11, 7, 6, 6; and at Selborne to 7, 6, 10; and on the 31st of January, just before sunrise, with rime on the trees, and on the tube of the glass, the quicksilver sunk exactly to zero, being 32 degrees below the freezing point; but by eleven in the morning, though in the shade, it sprung up to 16½*—a most unusual degree of cold this for the south of England! During these four nights, the cold was so penetrating, that it occasioned ice in warm chambers, and under beds; and in the day the wind was so keen, that persons of robust constitutions could scarcely endure to face it. The Thames was at once so frozen over, both above and below the bridge, that crowds ran about on the ice. The streets were now strangely encumbered with snow, which crumbled and trode dusty; and, turning gray, resembled bay-salt; what had fallen on the roofs was so perfectly dry, that from first to last it lay twenty-six days on the houses in the city; a longer time than had been remembered by the oldest housekeepers living. According to all appearances, we might now have expected the continuance of this rigorous weather for weeks to come, since every night increased in severity; but behold, without any apparent cause, on the first of February, a thaw took place, and some rain followed before night; making good the observation above, that frosts often go off, as it were at once, without any gradual declension of cold. On the second of February, the thaw persisted; and on the third, swarms of little insects were frisking and sporting in a court-yard at South Lambeth, as if they had felt no frost. Why the juices in the small bodies and smaller limbs of such minute beings are not frozen, is a matter of curious inquiry.†

* At Selborne, the cold was greater than at any other place that the author could hear of with certainty; though some reported at the time, that, at a village at Kent, the thermometer fell two degrees below zero, viz. thirty-four degrees below the freezing point.

The thermometer used at Selborne was graduated by Benjamin Martin.

† We have the best evidence to prove that both fish and molluscous animals may be frozen without destroying their vitality. A gentleman at Camberwell had an inflamed eye during the winter of 1829, and kept a leech which was applied to the temple several times. It was put into water in a vial placed near the fireplace of the parlour. The cold at that time was very severe, and

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Severe frosts seem to be partial, or to run in currents; for at the same juncture, as the author was informed by accurate correspondents, at Lyndon, in the county of Rutland, the thermometer stood at 19; at Blackburn, in Lancashire, at 19; and at Manchester at 21, 20, and 18. Thus does some unknown circumstance strangely overbalance latitude, and render the cold sometimes much greater in the southern than the northern parts of this kingdom.

The consequences of this severity were, that in Hampshire, at the melting of the snow, the wheat looked well, and the turnips came forth little injured. The laurels and laurustines were somewhat damaged, but only in hot aspects. No evergreens were quite destroyed; and not half the damage sustained that befell in January, 1768. Those laurels that were a little scorched on the south sides, were perfectly untouched on their north sides. The care taken to shake the snow, day by day, from the branches, seemed greatly to avail the author's evergreens. A neighbour's laurel hedge, in a high situation, and facing to the north, was perfectly green and vigorous; and the Portugal laurels remained unhurt.

As to the birds, the thrushes and blackbirds were mostly destroyed: and the partridges, by the weather and poachers, were so thinned, that few remained to breed the following year.

## LETTER CVII.

### TO THE SAME.

As the frost in December, 1784, was very extraordinary, you, I trust, will not be displeased to hear the particulars; and especially when I promise to say no more about the severities of winter after I have finished this letter.

every night the leech was frozen, and thawed the following day. It was observed by Capt. Franklin that during the severe winter he experienced near the Coppermine River, the fish froze as they were taken out of the nets. In a short time they became a solid mass of ice, and by a blow or two of the hatchet, they were easily split open. If, however, in the completely frozen state, they were thawed before the fire, they recovered their animation.—Ed.

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The first week in December was very wet, with the barometer very low. On the 7th, with the barometer at 28·5 came on a vast snow, which continued all that day and the next, and most part of the following night; so that, by the morning of the 9th, the works of men were quite overwhelmed, the lanes filled so as to be impassable, and the ground covered twelve or fifteen inches without any drifting. In the evening of the 9th, the air began to be so very sharp that we thought it would be curious to attend to the motions of a thermometer; we therefore hung out two, one made by Martin and one by Dollond, which soon began to show us what we were to expect; for, by ten o'clock, they fell to 21, and, at eleven, to 4, when we went to bed. On the 10th, in the morning, the quicksilver of Dollond's glass was down to half a degree below zero, and that of Martin's, which was absurdly graduated only to four degrees below zero, sunk quite into the brass guard of the ball, so that, when the weather became most interesting, this was useless. On the 10th, at eleven at night, though the air was perfectly still, Dollond's glass went down to one degree below zero! This strange severity of the weather made me very desirous to know what degree of cold there might be in such an exalted and near situation as Newton. We had, therefore, on the morning of the 10th, written to Mr. ——, and entreated him to hang out his thermometer, made by Adams, and to pay some attention to it morning and evening, expecting wonderful phenomena in so elevated a region, at two hundred feet, or more, above my house; but, behold! on the 10th, at eleven at night, it was down only to 17, and the next morning at 22, when mine was at 10! We were so disturbed at this unexpected reverse of comparative local cold, that we sent one of my glasses up, thinking that of Mr. —— must, somehow, be wrongly constructed. But when the instruments came to be confronted, they went exactly together, so that, for one night at least, the cold at Newton was eighteen degrees less than at Selborne, and, through the whole frost, ten or twelve degrees; and, indeed, when we came to observe consequences, we could readily credit this, for all my laurustines, bays, ilexes, arbutuses, cypresses, and even my Portugal laurels,* and, which

* Mr. Miller, in his *Gardener's Dictionary*, says positively, that the

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occasions more regret, my fine sloping laurel-hedge, were scorched up, while, at Newton, the same trees have not lost a leaf!

We had steady frost on the 25th, when the thermometer, in the morning, was down to 10 with us, and at Newton only to 21. Strong frost continued till the 31st, when some tendency to thaw was observed, and by January 3rd, 1785, the thaw was confirmed, and some rain fell.*

A circumstance that I must not omit, because it was new to us, is, that on Friday, December the 10th, being bright sunshine, the air was full of icy *spiculæ*, floating in all directions, like atoms in a sunbeam, let into a dark room. We thought them, at first, particles of the rime falling from my tall hedges, but were soon convinced to the contrary, by making our observations in open places, where no rime could reach us. Were they watery particles of the air frozen as they floated, or were they evaporations from the snow frozen as they mounted?

We were much obliged to the thermometers for the early information they gave us, and hurried our apples, pears, onions, potatoes, &c., into the cellar and warm closets; while those who had not, or neglected such warnings, lost all their stores of roots and fruits, and had their very bread and cheese frozen.

I must not omit to tell you, that during those two Siberian days my parlour cat was so electric, that had a person stroked her, and been properly insulated, the shock might have been given to a whole circle of people.

Portugal laurels remained untouched in the remarkable frost of 1739-40. So that either that accurate observer was much mistaken, or else the frost of December, 1784, was much more severe and destructive than that in the year above-mentioned.

* If a frost happens, even when the ground is tolerably dry, it has been observed that when a thaw comes, the paths and fields are all in a *batter*. Country people say that the frost draws moisture, but the reason is that the vapours continually ascending from the earth, are bound in by the frost and not suffered to escape till released by the thaw. No wonder, then, that the surface is all in a float, since the quantity of moisture by evaporation that arises daily from every acre of ground, is astonishing. Dr. Watson, by experiment, found it to be 1600 to 1900 gallons in 12 hours, according to the degree of heat in the earth, and the quantity of rain newly fallen.—Mr. White, *from his unpublished MSS.*

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I forgot to mention before, that during the two severe days, two men, who were tracing hares in the snow, had their feet frozen; and two men, who were much better employed, had their fingers so affected by the frost, while they were thrashing in a barn, that mortification followed, from which they did not recover for many weeks.

The frost killed all the furze and most of the ivy, and in many places stripped the hollies of all their leaves. It came at a very early time of the year, before old November ended, and may yet be allowed, from its effects, to have exceeded any since 1739-40.

## LETTER CVIII.

### TO THE SAME.

As the effects of heat are seldom very remarkable in the northerly climate of England, where the summers are often so defective in warmth and sunshine, as not to ripen the fruits of the earth so well as might be wished, I shall be more concise in my account of the severity of a summer season, and so make a little amends for the prolix account of the degrees of cold and the inconveniences that we suffered from some late rigorous winters.

The summers of 1781 and 1783 were unusually hot and dry; to them, therefore, I shall turn back in my journals, without recurring to any more distant period. In the former of these years, my peach and nectarine trees suffered so much from the heat, that the rind on the bodies was scalded and came off; since which, the trees have been in a decaying state. This may prove a hint to assiduous gardeners to fence and shelter their wall-trees with mats or boards, as they may easily do, because such annoyance is seldom of long continuance. During that summer, also, I observed that my apples were coddled, as it were, on the trees; so that they had no quickness of flavour, and would not keep in the winter. This circumstance put me in mind of what I have heard travellers assert, that they never ate a good apple or

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apricot in the south of Europe, where the heats were so great as to render the juices vapid and insipid.

The great pests of a garden are wasps, which destroy all the finer fruits just as they are coming into perfection. In 1781, we had none; in 1783, there were myriads, which would have devoured all the produce of my garden, had we not set the boys to take the nests, and caught thousands with hazel-twigs tipped with bird-lime; we have since employed the boys to take and destroy the large breeding wasps in spring. Such expedients have a great effect on these marauders, and will keep them under. Though wasps do not abound but in hot summers, yet they do not prevail in every hot summer, as I have instanced in the two years above mentioned.

In the sultry season of 1783, honey-dews were so frequent as to deface and destroy the beauties of my garden. My honeysuckles, which were one week the most sweet and lovely objects that eye could behold, became the next the most loathsome, being enveloped in a viscous substance, and loaded with black *aphides*, or smother-flies. The occasion of this clammy appearance seems to be this, that in hot weather the effluvia of flowers in fields, and meadows, and gardens, are drawn up in the day by a brisk evaporation, and then in the night fall down again with the dews in which they are entangled; that the air is strongly scented, and therefore impregnated with the particles of flowers in summer weather, our senses will inform us; and that this clammy sweet substance is of the vegetable kind we may learn from bees, to whom it is very grateful; and we may be assured that it falls in the night, because it is always first seen in warm, still mornings.

On chalky and sandy soils, and in the hot villages about London, the thermometer has been often observed to mount as high as 83 or 84; but with us, in this hilly and woody district, I have hardly ever seen it exceed 80, nor does it often arrive at that pitch. The reason, I conclude is, that our dense clayey soil, so much shaded by trees, is not so easily heated through as those above mentioned; and, besides, our mountains cause currents of air and breezes; and the vast effluvia from our woodlands temper and moderate our heats.

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## LETTER CIX.

TO THE SAME.

THE summer of the year 1783 was an amazing and portentous one, and full of horrible phenomena; for, besides the alarming meteors and tremendous thunder storms that affrighted and distressed the different counties of this kingdom, the peculiar haze, or smoky fog, that prevailed for many weeks in this island, and in every part of Europe, and even beyond its limits, was a most extraordinary appearance, unlike anything known within the memory of man. By my journal, I find that I had noticed this strange occurrence from June 23 to July 20, inclusive, during which period, the wind varied to every quarter, without making any alteration in the air. The sun, at noon, looked as black as a clouded moon, and shed a rust-coloured ferruginous light on the ground and floors of rooms, but was particularly lurid and blood-coloured at rising and setting. All the time, the heat was so intense that butchers' meat could hardly be eaten the day after it was killed; and the flies swarmed so in the lanes and hedges, that they rendered the horses half frantic, and riding irksome. The country people began to look with a superstitious awe at the red lowering aspect of the sun; and, indeed, there was reason for the most enlightened person to be apprehensive, for all the while Calabria, and part of the isle of Sicily, were torn and convulsed with earthquakes; and about that juncture, a volcano sprang out of the sea on the coast of Norway. On this occasion, Milton's noble simile of the sun, in his first book of Paradise Lost, frequently occurred to my mind; and it is indeed particularly applicable, because, towards the end, it alludes to a superstitious kind of dread, with which the minds of men are always impressed by such strange and unusual phenomena:—

——"As when the sun, new risen,
Looks through the horizontal, misty air
Shorn of his beams; or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs."——

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## LETTER CX.

### TO THE SAME.

We are very seldom annoyed with thunder-storms; and it is no less remarkable than true, that those which arise in the south have hardly been known to reach this village; for, before they get over us, they take a direction to the east or to the west, or sometimes divide into two, and go in part to one of those quarters, and in part to the other; as was truly the case in the summer of 1783, when, though the country round was continually harassed with tempests, and often from the south, yet we escaped them all, as appears by my journal of that summer. The only way that I can at all account for this fact—for such it is—is, that on that quarter, between us and the sea, there are continual mountains, hill behind hill, such as Nore-hill, the Barnet, Burter-hill, and Portsdown, which somehow divert the storms, and give them a different direction. High promontories, and elevated grounds, have always been observed to attract clouds, and disarm them of their mischievous contents, which are discharged into the trees and summits, as soon as they come in contact with these turbulent meteors; while the humble vales escape, because they are so far beneath them.

But when I say I do not remember a thunder-storm from the south, I do not mean that we never have suffered from thunder storms at all; for on June 5th, 1784, the thermometer in the morning being at 64, and at noon at 70, the barometer at 29·6½, and the wind north, I observed a blue mist, smelling strongly of sulphur, hang along our sloping woods, and seeming to indicate that thunder was at hand. I was called in about two in the afternoon, and so missed seeing the gathering of the clouds in the north, which they who were abroad assured me had something uncommon in its appearance. At about a quarter after two, the storm began in the parish of Hartley, moving slowly from north to south; and from thence it came over Norton-farm, and so to Grange-farm, both in this parish. It began with vast drops of rain, which were soon succeeded by round hail, and then by convex pieces of ice, which

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measured three inches in girth. Had it been as extensive as it was violent, and of any continuance (for it was very short), it must have ravaged all the neighbourhood. In the parish of Hartley, it did some damage to one farm; but Norton, which lay in the centre of the storm, was greatly injured; as was Grange, which lay next to it. It did but just reach to the middle of the village, where the hail broke my north windows, and all my garden lights, and hand-glasses, and many of my neighbours' windows. The extent of the storm was about two miles in length, and one in breadth. We were just sitting down to dinner; but were soon diverted from our repast by the clattering of tiles and the jingling of glass. There fell at the same time prodigious torrents of rain on the farms above mentioned, which occasioned a flood as violent as it was sudden; doing great damage to the meadows and fallows, by deluging the one, and washing away the soil of the other. The hollow lane towards Alton was torn and disordered as not to be passable till mended, rocks being removed that weighed two hundred weight. Those that saw the effect which the great hail had on the ponds and pools, say that the dashing of the water made an extraordinary appearance, the froth and spray standing up in the air three feet above the surface. The rushing and roaring of the hail, as it approached, was truly tremendous.

Though the clouds at South Lambeth, near London, were at that juncture thin and light, and no storm was in sight, nor within hearing, yet the air was strongly electric; for the bells of an electric machine at that place rang repeatedly, and fierce sparks were discharged.

When I first took the present work in hand, I proposed to have added an *Annus-Historico-Naturalis*, or the Natural History of the Twelve Months of the Year; which would have comprised many incidents and occurrences that have not fallen into my way to be mentioned in my series of letters;—but as Mr. Aiken of Warrington has lately published somewhat of this sort, and as the length of my correspondence has sufficiently put your patience to the test, I shall here take a respectful leave of you and Natural History together. And am, with all due deference and regard,

Your most obliged, and most humble servant,

GIL. WHITE.

SELBORNE, *June* 25, 1787.

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# OBSERVATIONS

ON

# VARIOUS PARTS OF NATURE,

FROM MR. WHITE'S MSS.

WITH REMARKS BY MR. MARKWICK.

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# OBSERVATIONS ON BIRDS.

## BIRDS IN GENERAL.

In severe weather, fieldfares, redwings, sky-larks, and titlarks, resort to watered meadows for food; the latter wades up to its belly in pursuit of the pupæ of insects, and runs along upon the floating grass and weeds. Many gnats are on the snow near the water; these support the birds in part.

Birds are much influenced in their choice of food by colour;* for though white currants are much sweeter fruit than red, yet they seldom touch the former till they have devoured every branch of the latter.

Redstarts, fly-catchers, and black-caps, arrive early in April. If these little delicate beings are birds of passage (as we have reason to suppose they are, because they are never seen in winter), how could they, feeble as they seem, bear up against such storms of snow and rain, and make their way, through such meteorous turbulence, as one should suppose would embarrass and retard the most hardy and resolute of the winged nation? Yet they keep their appointed times and seasons; and, in spite of frosts and winds, return to their stations periodically, as if they had met with nothing to obstruct them. The withdrawing and appearance

* Mr. White has remarked, page 51, "that food has great influence on the colour of animals." The dark colour in wild birds is a great safeguard to them against their enemies; and this is the reason, that, among birds of bright plumage, the young do not assume their gay colours till the second or third year, as the cygnet, the gold and silver pheasants, &c. The remarkable change of plumage among the gull tribe, is a curious and intricate subject. Is the circumstance mentioned by Mr. Pegge true, "that butterflies partake the colour of the flowers they feed on?" I think not. See *Anonymiana*, p. 469.—Mitford.



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of the short-winged summer birds is a very puzzling circumstance in natural history!

When the boys bring me wasps' nests, my bantam fowls fare deliciously, and, when the combs are pulled to pieces, devour the young wasps in their maggot state with the highest glee and delight. Any insect-eating bird would do the same; and therefore I have often wondered that the accurate Mr. Ray should call one species of buzzard *buteo apivorus sive vespivorus*, or the *honey-buzzard*, because some combs of wasps happened to be found in one of their nests. The combs were conveyed thither doubtless for the sake of the maggots or nymphs, and not for their honey, since none is to be found in the combs of wasps.* Birds of prey occasionally feed on insects; thus have I seen a tame kite picking up the female ants full of eggs, with much satisfaction. WHITE.

That redstarts, fly-catchers, black-caps, and other slender-billed insectivorous small birds, particularly the swallow tribe, make their first appearance very early in the spring, is a well-known fact; though the fly-catcher is the latest of them all in its visit (as this accurate naturalist observes in another place), for it is never seen before the month of May. If these delicate creatures come to us from a distant country, they will probably be exposed in their passages, as Mr. White justly remarks, to much greater difficulties from storms and tempests than their feeble powers appear to be able to surmount: † on the other hand, if we suppose them

* Those who have read that pleasing and instructive work, "The Ornithological Rambles in Sussex," will find an interesting mention of the kestrel flying along the surface of fields and feeding on grasshoppers, and probably other insects.—ED.

† There certainly does exist a difficulty in conceiving how some of the birds of passage, such feeble and bad fliers, should be able to migrate to such a vast distance; but some of our wonder will perhaps diminish when we read the account of the manner in which the quail crosses the Mediterranean, for the coast of Africa. "Towards the end of September the quails avail themselves of a northerly wind to take their departure from Europe, and flapping one wing, while they present the other to the gale, half sail, half oar, they graze the billows of the Mediterranean with their fattened rumps, and bury themselves in the sands of Africa, that they may serve as food to the famished inhabitants of Zara."—ST. PIERRE's *Studies of Nature*, vol. i. p. 91.—MITFORD.

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to pass the winter in a dormant state, in this country, concealed in caverns, or other hiding-places, sufficiently guarded from the extreme cold of our winter to preserve their life, and that, at the approach of spring, they revive from their torpid state, and re-assume their usual powers of action, it will entirely remove the first difficulty, arising from the storms and tempests they are liable to meet with in their passage: but how are we to get over the still greater difficulty of their revivification from their torpid state? * What degree of warmth in the temperature of the air is necessary to produce that effect, and how it operates on the functions of animal life, are questions not easily answered.

How could Mr. White suppose that Ray named this species the honey-buzzard because it fed on honey, when he not only named it in Latin *buteo apivorus sive vespivorus*, but expressly says, that "it feeds on insects, and brings up its young with the maggots, or nymphs, of wasps?"

That birds of prey, when in want of their proper food, flesh, sometimes feed on insects, I have little doubt, and think I have observed the common buzzard (*falco buteo*) to settle on the ground and pick up insects of some kind or other.† MARKWICK.

ROOKS.—Rooks are continually fighting, and pulling each other's nests to pieces: ‡ these proceedings are inconsistent

* Mr. Brown in his edition of the Natural History of Selborne says, that he has received from a friend the following authentic accounts of the migration of birds, which cannot fail to be highly interesting, as proving the long excursions periodically taken by them. A chaffinch and a goldfinch were caught on board a ship in the Bay of Biscay, and, at the same time, several snipes were seen: a small white owl flew round the vessel; a hawk, several swallows, and martins in great numbers, were seen for several days, many of them resting on the rigging. A hen redstart followed the ship for some days, and was so tame that she used to enter the ports of the gun-room, where she was regularly fed by the sailors. The spotted gallinule and a fine kestrel hawk were caught in the rigging, about 424 miles from land.

† There is reason to believe, that insects form also part of the food even of the larger beasts of prey. "Beetles, flies, worms, form part of the lion and tiger's food, as they do that of the fox." See JARROLD's *Disert. on Man.* MITFORD.

‡ Rooks generally begin to build their nests about the end of February, but in Mr. White's unpublished MSS. I find mention made of a rook's nest with young in it as late, or, perhaps I should say, as early as the 26th of



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with living in such close community. And yet, if a pair offer to build in a single tree, the nest is plundered and demolished at once. Some rooks roost on their nest trees. The twigs which the rooks drop in building, supply the poor with brushwood to light their fires. Some unhappy pairs are not permitted to finish any nest till the rest have completed their building. As soon as they get a few sticks together, a party comes and demolishes the whole.* As soon as rooks have finished their nests, and before they lay, the cocks begin to feed the hens, who receive their bounty with a fondling, tremulous voice, and fluttering wings, and all the little blandishments that are expressed by the young, while in a helpless state. This gallant deportment of the male is continued through the whole season of incubation. These birds do not copulate on trees, nor in their nests, but on the ground in the open fields.†

WHITE.

After the first brood of rooks are sufficiently fledged, they all leave their nest-trees in the day-time, and resort to some distant place in search of food, but return regularly every evening, in vast flights to their nest-trees, where, after flying round several times, with much noise and clamour, till they are all assembled together, they take up their abode for the night.

MARKWICK.

THRUSHES.—Thrushes during long droughts, are of great service in hunting out shell-snails,‡ which they pull in pieces for their young, and are thereby very serviceable in gardens.

November. On the 6th of December, one of them was found dead about half grown.—ED.

* I have observed this to be the case with canaries when confined in breeding cages, and also with hedge-sparrows.—ED.

† The very beautiful, one may almost say poetical, way in which the male bird procures a mate by the power of his song, may be seen in the preface to Mr. Montagu's *Ornithological Dictionary*, p. xxx; from which this corollary may be inferred, that if a confined bird had learned the song of another, without retaining any part of its natural notes, and was set at liberty, it is probable it would never find a mate of its own.—MITFORD.

‡ I have frequently observed thrushes place a shell-snail between two stones, or a hollow in a gravel-walk, to prevent their rolling, and then picking them till they broke them.—ED.

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THE MAGPIE.

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Missel thrushes do not destroy the fruit in gardens like the other species of *turdi*, but feed on the berries of misseltoe, and in the spring on ivy berries, which then begin to ripen. In the summer, when their young become fledged, they leave neighbourhoods, and retire to sheep-walks and wild commons.

The magpies, when they have young, destroy the broods of missel thrushes, though the dams are fierce birds, and fight bold in defence of their nests. It is probably to avoid such insults, that this species of thrush, though wild at other times, delights to build near houses, and in frequented walks and gardens. WHITE.

Of the truth of this I have been an eye-witness, having seen the common thrush feeding on the shell-snail.

In the very early part of this spring (1797), a bird of this species used to sit every morning on the top of some high elms close to my windows, and delight me with its charming song,* attracted thither, probably, by some ripe ivy berries that grew near the place.

I have remarked something like the latter fact; for I remember, many years ago, seeing a pair of these birds fly up repeatedly and attack some larger bird, which I suppose disturbed their nest in my orchard, uttering, at the same time, violent shrieks.—Since writing the above, I have seen, more than once, a pair of these birds attack some magpies that had disturbed their nest, with great violence, and loud shrieks. MARKWICK.

POULTRY.—Many creatures are endowed with a ready discernment to see what will turn to their own advantage and emolument; and often discover more sagacity than could be expected. Thus, my neighbour's poultry watch for waggons loaded with wheat, and, running after them, pick up a number of grains which are shaken from the sheaves by the agitation of the carriages. Thus, when my brother used to take down his gun to shoot sparrows, his cats would run out before him, to be ready to catch up the birds as they fell.

* " . . . dew drops thick as early blossoms hung,
And trembled as the minstrel sweetly sung."—BLOOMFIELD.

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The earnest and early propensity of the *gallinæ* to roost on high is very observable;* and discovers a strong dread impressed on their spirits respecting vermin that may annoy them on the ground during the hours of darkness. Hence poultry, if left to themselves and not housed, will perch the winter through on yew trees and fir trees; and turkeys and guinea fowls, heavy as they are, get up into apple trees; pheasants also, in woods, sleep on trees to avoid foxes; while pea-fowls climb to the tops of the highest trees round their owner's house for security, let the weather be ever so cold or blowing. Partridges, it is true, roost on the ground, not having the faculty of perching; but then the same fear prevails in their minds; for, through apprehensions from polecats and stoats, they never trust themselves to coverts, but nestle together in the midst of large fields, far removed from hedges and coppices, which they love to haunt in the day, and where, at that season, they can skulk more secure from the ravages of rapacious birds.

As to ducks and geese, their awkward, splay, web-feet forbid them to settle on trees;† they therefore, in the hours of darkness and danger, betake themselves to their own element, the water, where, amidst large lakes and pools, like ships riding at anchor, they float the whole night long in peace and security. WHITE.

Guinea fowls not only roost on high, but in hard weather resort, even in the day-time, to the very tops of highest trees.‡

* Fowls that roost in trees are much later in laying their eggs than those which have been housed and kept warm. Fowls belonging to London bakers, and which roost over their ovens, are very early layers. Warmth, therefore, seems to be necessary to the early production of eggs, and it might be worth inquiry whether those birds which are most exposed to cold do not begin the process of incubation at a later period than those birds which affect warmth. Pigeons are early breeders, and they are warmly housed.—ED.

† The Cape geese in Richmond Park not only settle on trees, but make their nests in the old oak pollards, and convey their young in safety to the ground by placing one at a time under one of their wings. When these geese made their nests on the ground of the island in the large pond in the park, the water-rats destroyed the eggs, which induced the birds to take to the trees near the side of the pond.—ED.

‡ This, probably, is the reason why they lay their eggs so much later in

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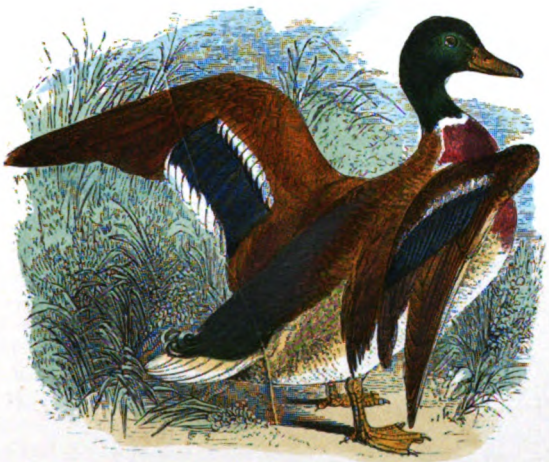

THE WILD DUCK.

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Last winter, when the ground was covered with snow, I discovered all my guinea fowls, in the middle of the day, sitting on the highest boughs of some very tall elms, chattering and making a great clamour: I ordered them to be driven down, lest they should be frozen to death in so elevated a situation; but this was not effected without much difficulty, they being very unwilling to quit their lofty abode, notwithstanding one of them had its feet so much frozen, that we were obliged to kill it. I know not how to account for this, unless it was occasioned by their aversion to the snow on the ground, they being birds that came originally from a hot climate.*

Notwithstanding the awkward, splay, web-feet, as Mr. White calls them, of the duck genus, some of the foreign species have the power of settling on the boughs of trees, apparently with great ease; an instance of which I have seen in the Earl of Ashburnham's menagerie, where the summer duck (*anas sponsa*) flew up and settled on the branch of an oak tree in my presence; but whether any of them roost on trees in the night, we are not informed by any author that I am acquainted with. I suppose not; but that, like the rest of the genus, they sleep on the water, where the birds of this genus are not always perfectly secure, as will appear from the following circumstances, which happened in this neighbourhood a few years since, as I was credibly informed. A female fox was found in the morning drowned in the same pond in which were several geese, and it was supposed, that in the night, the fox swam into the pond to devour the geese, but was attacked by the gander, which being the most powerful in its own element, buffeted the fox with its wings about the head till it was drowned. MARKWICK.

HEN PARTRIDGE.—A hen partridge came out of a ditch,

the year than the common fowl or even the pheasant, which latter, however, roosts in trees, but generally either in warm fir-trees, or in sheltered situations in woods.—ED.

* It is a beautiful arrangement of Providence that guinea-fowls, which are African birds, and deposit their eggs on the ground, should have the shells so hard that the common snakes of the country cannot break them. They may, indeed, remove some of them from the nest, but in order to make up for this deficiency, the guinea-fowl lays more eggs than any other bird.—ED.

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and ran along shivering with her wings, and crying out as if wounded and unable to get from us. While the dam acted this distress, the boy who attended me saw her brood, that was small and unable to fly, run for shelter into an old fox-earth under the bank. So wonderful a power is instinct.*

WHITE.

It is not uncommon to see an old partridge feign itself wounded, and run along on the ground fluttering and crying, before either dog or man, to draw them away from its helpless unfledged young ones. I have seen it often; and once in particular, I saw a remarkable instance of the old bird's solicitude to save its brood. As I was hunting with a young pointer, the dog ran on a brood of very small partridges; the old bird cried, fluttered, and ran tumbling along, just before the dog's nose, till she had drawn him to a considerable distance, when she took wing and flew still further off, but not out of the field: on this the dog returned to me, near which place the young ones lay concealed in the grass, which the old bird no sooner perceived, than she flew back again to us, settled just before the dog's nose again, and, by rolling and tumbling about, drew off his attention from her young, and thus preserved her brood a second time. I have also seen, when a kite has been hovering over a covey of young partridges, the old birds fly up at the bird of prey, screaming and fighting with all their might, to preserve their brood.

MARKWICK.

A HYBRID PHEASANT.—Lord Stawell sent me, from the great lodge in the Holt, a curious bird for my inspection. It was found by the spaniels of one of his keepers in a coppice, and shot on the wing. The shape, hair, and habit of the bird, and the scarlet ring round the eyes, agreed well with the appearance of a cock pheasant; but then the head and neck, and breast and belly, were of a glossy black; and

* It is, no doubt, a wonderful instinct, and at the same time a proof how strongly Providence has implanted in animals the love of their young, which neither fear nor the natural love of self-preservation seems to lessen. Mr. Markwick's remarks on the fact mentioned by Mr. White are highly interesting to every lover of nature.—ED.

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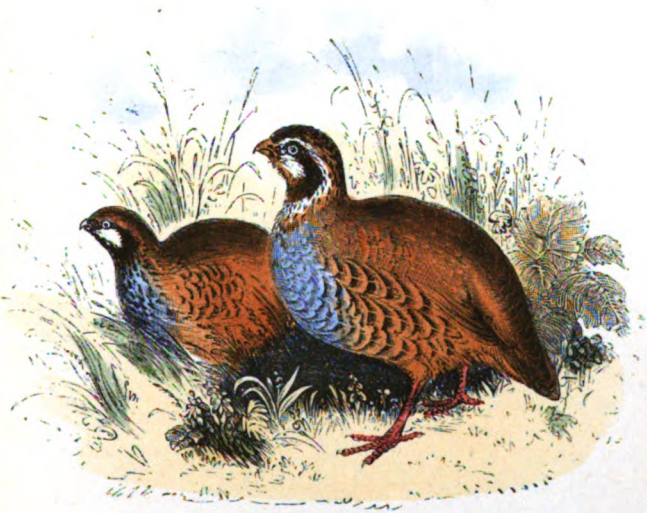

THE RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE. (*Perdix rufus.*)

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though it weighed three pounds three ounces and a half,* the weight of a large full-grown cock pheasant, yet there was no sign of any spurs on the legs, as is usual with all grown cock pheasants, who have long ones. The legs and feet were naked of feathers, and therefore it could be nothing of the grouse kind. In the tail were no long, bending feathers, such as cock pheasants usually have, and are characteristic of the sex. The tail was much shorter than the tail of a hen pheasant, and blunt and square at the end. The back, wing-feathers, and tail, were all of a pale russet, curiously streaked, somewhat like the upper parts of a hen partridge. I returned it with my verdict, that it was probably a spurious, or hybrid hen-bird, bred between a cock pheasant and some domestic fowl. When I came to talk with the keeper who brought it, he told me that some pea-hens had been known last summer to haunt the coppices and coverts where this mule was found.

Mr. Elmer, of Farnham, the famous game-painter, was employed to take an exact copy of this curious bird.

N.B. It ought to be mentioned, that some good judges have imagined this bird to have been a stray grouse or black-cock; it is, however, to be observed, that Mr. W. remarks, that its legs and feet were naked, whereas those of the grouse are feathered to the toes. WHITE.

Mr. Latham observes, that "pea-hens, after they have done laying, sometimes assume the plumage of the male bird," and has given a figure of the male-feathered pea-hen now to be seen in the Leverian Museum; and M. Salerne remarks, that "the hen pheasant, when she has done laying and sitting, will get the plumage of the male." May not this hybrid pheasant, as Mr. White calls it, be a bird of this kind? that is, an old hen pheasant which has just begun to assume the plumage of the cock.† MARKWICK.

* Hen pheasants usually weigh only two pounds ten ounces.

† See the account by John Hunter, in the *Philosophical Transact.* Art. xxx. 1760. "The subject of the account is a hen pheasant with the feathers of the cock. The author concludes, that it is most probable that all those hen pheasants which are found wild, and have the feathers of the cock, were formerly perfect hens, but that now they are changed with age, and perhaps by certain constitutional circumstances." It appears also, that the hen, taking

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LAND-RAIL.—A man brought me a land-rail, or daker-hen, a bird so rare in this district that we seldom see more than one or two in a season, and these only in autumn. This is deemed a bird of passage by all the writers; yet, from its formation, seems to be poorly qualified for migration; for its wings are short, and placed so forward, and out of the centre of gravity, that it flies in a very heavy and embarrassed manner, with its legs hanging down; and can hardly be sprung a second time, as it runs very fast, and seems to depend more on the swiftness of its feet than on its flying.

When we came to draw it, we found the entrails so soft and tender, that in appearance they might have been dressed like the ropes of a woodcock. The craw, or crop, was small and lank, containing a mucus; the gizzard thick and strong, and filled with small shell-snails, some whole, and many ground to pieces, through the attrition which is occasioned by the muscular force and motion of that intestine. We saw no gravels among the food; perhaps the shell snails might perform the functions of gravels or pebbles, and might grind one another. Land-rails used to abound formerly, I remember, in the low, wet bean fields of Christian Malford, in North Wilts, and in the meadows near Paradise Gardens, at Oxford, where I have often heard them cry, crex, crex. The bird mentioned above weighed 7½ oz., was fat and tender, and in flavour like the flesh of a woodcock. The liver was very large and delicate. WHITE.

Land-rails are more plentiful with us than in the neighbourhood of Selborne. I have found four brace in an afternoon, and a friend of mine lately shot nine in two adjoining fields; but I never saw them in any other season than the autumn.

That it is a bird of passage* there can be little doubt,

the plumage of the cock, is not confined to the pheasant alone; it takes place also with the pea-hen, as may be seen in the specimen belonging to Lady Tynte, which was in the Leverian Museum. After many broods, this hen took much of the plumage of the cock, and also the fine train belonging to that bird. See also MONTAGU'S *Ornithological Dictionary*, Art. *Pheasant*. REV. J. MITFORD.

* The land-rail or corn-crake is a bird of passage, and a summer visitor to this country. When in the neighbourhood of Swansea some years ago, I was assured by a gentleman residing near that place, that he discovered in a field

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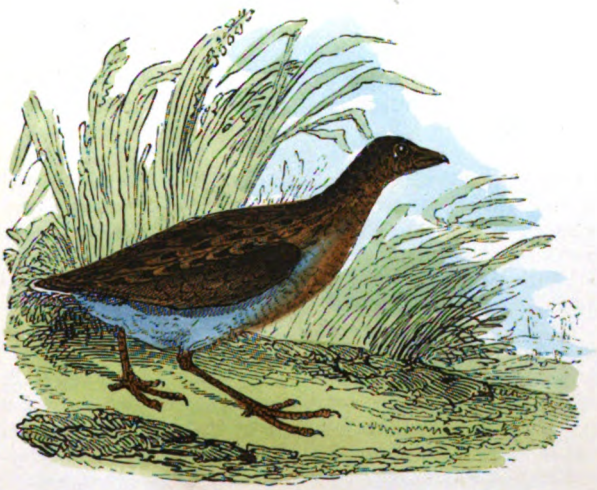

THE CORN-CRAKE, OR LAND-RAIL. (*Ortygometra crex.*)

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though Mr. White thinks it poorly qualified for migration, on account of the wings being short, and not placed in the exact centre of gravity: how that may be I cannot say, but I know that its heavy sluggish flight is not owing to its inability of flying faster, for I have seen it fly very swiftly; although in general its actions are sluggish. Its unwillingness to rise proceeds, I imagine, from its sluggish disposition, and its great timidity; for it will sometimes squat so close to the ground as to suffer itself to be taken up by the hand, rather than rise; and yet it will at times run very fast.

What Mr. White remarks respecting the small shell-snails found in its gizzard, confirms my opinion, that it frequents corn fields, seed clover, and brakes or fern, more for the sake of snails, slugs, and other insects which abound in such places, than for the grain or seeds; and that it is entirely an insectivorous bird.* MARKWICK.

FOOD FOR THE RING-DOVE.—One of my neighbours shot a ring-dove on an evening as it was returning from feed and going to roost. When his wife had picked and drawn it, she found its craw stuffed with the most nice and tender tops of turnips. These she washed and boiled, and so sat down to a choice and delicate plate of greens, culled and provided in this extraordinary manner.

Hence we may see that graminivorous birds, when grain fails, can subsist on the leaves of vegetables. There is reason to suppose that they would not long be healthy without; for turkeys, though corn-fed, delight in a variety of plants, such as cabbage, lettuce, endive, &c.; and poultry pick much grass; while geese live for months together on commons by grazing alone.

> "Nought is useless made:——
> ——— On the barren heath
> The shepherd tends his flock, that daily crop
> Their verdant dinner from the mossy turf
> Sufficient: after them, the cackling *goose*,
> Close grazer, finds wherewith to ease her want."
>
> PHILIPS' *Cyder*.

WHITE.

near the sea a large congregation of these birds. The next day not one was to be found.—ED.

* There is no doubt of its feeding much on grass seeds, which the length

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That many graminivorous birds feed also on the herbage, or leaves of plants, there can be no doubt; partridges and larks frequently feed on the green leaves of turnips, which give a peculiar flavour to their flesh, that is to me, very palatable; the flavour also of wild ducks and geese greatly depends on the nature of their food; and their flesh frequently contracts a rank unpleasant taste, from their having lately fed on strong marshy aquatic plants, as I suppose.

That the leaves of vegetables are wholesome, and conducive to the health of birds, seems probable, for many people fat their ducks and turkeys with the leaves of lettuce chopped small. MARKWICK.

HEN-HARRIER.—A neighbouring gentleman sprung a pheasant in a wheat stubble, and shot at it; when, notwithstanding the report of the gun, it was immediately pursued by the blue hawk, known by the name of the hen-harrier, but escaped into some covert. He then sprung a second, and a third, in the same field, that got away in the same manner; the hawk hovering round him all the while that he was beating the field, conscious, no doubt, of the game that lurked in the stubble. Hence we may conclude that this bird of prey was rendered very daring and bold by hunger, and that hawks cannot always seize their game when they please. We may farther observe, that they cannot pounce their quarry on the ground, where it might be able to make a stout resistance, since so large a fowl as a pheasant could not but be visible to the piercing eye of a hawk, when hovering over the field. Hence that propensity of cowering and squatting, till they are almost trod on, which, no doubt, was intended as a mode of security: though long rendered destructive to the whole race of *gallinæ* by the invention of nets and guns. WHITE.

Of the great boldness and rapacity of birds of prey, when urged on by hunger, I have seen several instances; par-

of its legs and neck enable it to reach from the tops of the stalks. When confined, the seeds should therefore be placed above them, and not strewed on the ground. Mr. Herbert says that he does not believe the land-rail will touch a slug, and it may be doubted whether or not they ever take their food from the ground.—ED.

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HEN HARRIERS.

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ticularly, when shooting in the winter, in company with two friends, a woodcock flew across us, closely pursued by a small hawk; we all three fired at the woodcock instead of the hawk, which, notwithstanding the report of three guns close by it, continued its pursuit of the woodcock, struck it down, and carried it off, as we afterwards discovered.*

At another time, when partridge-shooting with a friend, we saw a ring-tail hawk rise out of a pit with some large bird in its claws; though at a great distance, we both fired, and obliged it to drop its prey, which proved to be one of the partridges which we were in pursuit of: and lastly, in an evening, I shot at and plainly saw that I had wounded a partridge; but, it being late, was obliged to go home without finding it again. The next morning, I walked round my land without any gun; but a favourite old spaniel followed my heels. When I came near the field where I wounded the bird the evening before, I heard the partridges call, and they seemed to be much disturbed. On my approaching the bar-way, they all rose, some on my right and some on my left hand; and just before and over my head, I perceived (though indistinctly, from the extreme velocity of their motion) two birds fly directly against each other, when instantly to my great astonishment, down dropped a partridge at my feet; the dog immediately seized it, and, on examination, I found the blood flow very fast from a fresh wound in the head, but there was some dry clotted blood on its wings and side; whence I concluded, that a hawk had singled out my wounded bird as the object of his prey, and had struck it down the instant that my approach had obliged the birds to rise on the wing; but the space between the hedges was so small, and the motion of the birds so instantaneous and quick, that I could not distinctly observe the operation. MARKWICK.

GREAT SPECKLED DIVER, OR LOON.—As one of my neighbours was traversing Wolmer Forest, from Bramshot across the moors, he found a large uncommon bird fluttering in the heath, but not wounded, which he brought home alive.

* I have known two instances of hawks dashing through a pane of glass to seize canary birds which were hanging near the window.—ED.

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On examination it proved to be *colymbus glacialis*, Linn., the great speckled diver, or loon, which is most excellently described in Willughby's *Ornithology*.

Every part and proportion of this bird is so incomparably adapted to its mode of life, that in no instance do we see the wisdom of God in the creation to more advantage. The head is sharp, and smaller than the part of the neck adjoining, in order that it may pierce the water; the wings are placed forward, and out of the centre of gravity, for a purpose which shall be noticed hereafter; the thighs quite at the podex, in order to facilitate diving; and the legs are flat, and as sharp backwards almost as the edge of a knife, that, in striking, they may easily cut the water; while the feet are palmated and broad for swimming, yet so folded up, when advanced to take a fresh stroke, as to be full as narrow as the shank. The two exterior toes of the feet are longest; the nails flat and broad, resembling the human, which give strength, and increase the power of swimming. The foot, when expanded, is not at right angles with the leg or body of the bird; but the exterior part inclining towards the head, forms an acute angle with the body; the intention being, not to give motion in the line of the legs themselves, but, by the combined impulse of both in an intermediate line, the line of the body.

Most people know, that have observed at all, that the swimming of birds is nothing more than a walking in the water, where one foot succeeds the other as on the land; yet no one, as far as I am aware, has remarked that diving fowls, while under water, impel and row themselves forward by a motion of their wings, as well as by the impulse of their feet: but such is really the case, as any person may easily be convinced, who will observe ducks when hunted by dogs in a clear pond. Nor do I know that any one has given a reason why the wings of diving fowls are placed so forward: doubtless, not for the purpose of promoting their speed in flying, since that position certainly impedes it; but probably for the increase of their motion under water, by the use of four oars instead of two; yet were the wings and feet nearer together, as in land birds, they would, when in action, rather hinder than assist one another.

This *colymbus* was of considerable bulk, weighing only

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three drachms short of three pounds avoirdupois. It measured in length, from the bill to the tail (which was very short) two feet, and to the extremities of the toes four inches more: and the breadth of the wings expanded was 42 inches. A person attempted to eat the body, but found it very strong and rancid, as is the flesh of all birds living on fish. Divers, or loons, though bred in the most northerly parts of Europe, yet are seen with us in very severe winters; and on the Thames are called sprat-loons, because they prey much on that sort of fish.

The legs of the *colymbi* and *mergi* are placed so very backward, and so out of all centre of gravity, that these birds cannot walk at all. They are called by Linnæus *compedes*, because they move on the ground as if shackled or fettered.

WHITE.

These accurate and ingenious observations, tending to set forth in a proper light the wonderful works of God in the creation, and to point out his wisdom in adapting the singular form and position of the limbs of this bird to the particular mode in which it is destined to pass the greatest part of its life, in an element much denser than the air, do Mr. White credit, not only as a naturalist, but as a man and as a philosopher, in the truest sense of the word, in my opinion; for, were we enabled to trace the works of Nature minutely and accurately, we should find, not only that every bird, but every creature, is equally well adapted to the purpose for which it was intended; though this fitness and propriety of form is more striking in such animals as are destined to any uncommon mode of life.

I have had in my possession two birds, which, though of a different genus, bear a great resemblance to Mr. White's *colymbus* in their manner of life, which is spent chiefly in the water, where they swim and dive with astonishing rapidity; for which purpose their fin-toed feet, placed far behind, and very short wings, are particularly well adapted, and show the wisdom of God in the creation as conspicuously as the bird before mentioned. These birds were the greater and lesser crested grebe (*podiceps cristatus et auritus*). What surprised me most was, that the first of these birds was found alive on dry ground, about seven miles from the sea, to which place

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there was no communication by water. How did it get so far from the sea, its wings and legs being so ill adapted either to flying or walking? The lesser crested grebe was also found in a fresh-water pond, which had no communication with other water, at some miles distance from the sea.

MARKWICK.

STONE-CURLEW.*—On the 27th of February, 1788, stone-curlews were heard to pipe; and on March 1st, after it was dark, some were passing over the village, as might be perceived by their quick short note, which they use in their nocturnal excursions by way of watch-word, that they may not stray and lose their companions.

Thus we see that, retire whithersoever they may in the winter, they return again early in the spring, and are, as it now appears, the first summer birds that come back. Perhaps the mildness of the season may have quickened the emigration of the curlews this year.

They spend the day in high elevated fields and sheep-walks; but seem to descend, in the night, to streams and meadows, perhaps for water, which their upland haunts do not afford them. WHITE.

On the 31st of January, 1792, I received a bird of this species, which had been recently killed by a neighbouring farmer, who said that he had frequently seen it in his fields during the former part of the winter: this perhaps was an occasional straggler, which, by some accident, was prevented from accompanying its companions in their migration.

MARKWICK.

THE SMALLEST UNCRESTED WILLOW-WREN.—The smallest

* These birds breed on the fallows, and often startle the midnight traveller by their shrill and ominous whistle. This is supposed to be the note so beautifully alluded to by Sir Walter Scott in his poem of the Lady of the Lake:—

"And in the plover's shrilly strain,
The signal whistle's heard again;"

for it certainly sounds more like a human note than that of a bird.—WILLIAMSON.

The eye of the stone-curlew is singularly beautiful.—ED.

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uncrested willow-wren, or chiff-chaf, is the next early summer bird which we have remarked; it utters two sharp piercing notes, so loud in hollow woods as to occasion an echo, and is usually first heard about the 20th of March. WHITE.

This bird, which Mr. White calls the smallest willow-wren, or chiff-chaf, makes its appearance very early in the spring, and is very common with us; but I cannot make out the three different species of willow-wrens, which he assures us he has discovered. Ever since the publication of his *History of Selborne*, I have used my utmost endeavours to discover his three birds, but hitherto without success. I have frequently shot the bird which "haunts only the tops of trees, and makes a sibilous noise," even in the very act of uttering that sibilous note; but it always proved to be the common willow-wren, or his chiff-chaf. In short, I never could discover more than one species, unless my greater pettichaps (*sylvia hortensis* of Latham) is his greatest willow-wren.

MARKWICK.

FERN-OWL, OR GOAT-SUCKER.—The country people have a notion that the fern-owl, or churn-owl, or eve-jarr, which they also call a puckeridge, is very injurious to weanling calves, by inflicting, as it strikes at them, the fatal distemper known to cow-leeches by the name of puckeridge. Thus does this harmless, ill-fated bird fall under a double imputation, which it by no means deserves,—in Italy, of sucking the teats of goats, whence it is called *caprimulgus;* and with us, of communicating a deadly disorder to cattle. But the truth of the matter is, the malady above mentioned is occasioned by the *œstrus bovis*, a dipterous insect, which lays its eggs along the chines of kine, where the maggots, when hatched, eat their way through the hide of the beast into the flesh, and grow to a very large size. I have just talked with a man, who says he has more than once stripped calves who have died of the puckeridge; that the ail or complaint lay along the chine, where the flesh was much swelled, and filled with purulent matter. Once I myself saw a large rough maggot of this sort squeezed out of the back of a cow. These maggots in Essex are called wornils.

The least observation and attention would convince men



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that these birds neither injure the goatherd nor the grazier, but are perfectly harmless, and subsist alone, being night-birds, on night-insects, such as *scarabæi* and *phalænæ;* and through the month of July, mostly on the *scarabæus solstitialis*, which in many districts abounds at that season. Those that we have opened have always had their craws stuffed with large night-moths and their eggs, and pieces of chaffers; nor does it anywise appear how they can, weak and unarmed as they seem, inflict any harm upon kine, unless they possess the powers of animal magnetism, and can affect them by fluttering over them.

A fern-owl this evening (August 27) showed off in a very unusual and entertaining manner, by hawking round and round the circumference of my great spreading oak for twenty times following, keeping mostly close to the grass, but occasionally glancing up amidst the boughs of the tree. This amusing bird was then in pursuit of a brood of some particular *phalænæ* belonging to the oak, of which there are several sorts; and exhibited on the occasion a command of wing superior, I think, to that of the swallow itself.

When a person approaches the haunt of fern-owls in an evening, they continue flying round the head of the obtruder; and, by striking their wings together above their backs, in the manner that the pigeons called smiters are known to do, make a smart snap; perhaps at that time they are jealous for their young; and their noise and gesture are intended by way of menace.

Fern-owls have attachment to oaks, no doubt on account of food; for the next evening we saw one again several times among the boughs of the same tree; but it did not skim round its stem over the grass, as on the evening before. In May, these birds find the *scarabæus melolontha* on the oak; and the *scarabæus solstitialis* at midsummer. These peculiar birds can only be watched and observed for two hours in the twenty-four: and then in a dubious twilight, an hour after sun-set, and an hour before sun-rise.

On this day (July 14, 1789), a woman brought me two eggs of a fern-owl, or eve-jarr, which she found on the verge of the Hanger, to the left of the Hermitage, under a beechen shrub. This person, who lives just at the foot of the Hanger, seems well acquainted with these nocturnal swallows, and

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says she has often found their eggs near that place, and that they lay only two at a time on the bare ground. The eggs were oblong, dusky, and streaked somewhat in the manner of the plumage of the parent bird, and were equal in size at each end. The dam was sitting on the eggs when found, which contained the rudiments of young, and would have been hatched, perhaps, in a week. From hence we may see the time of their breeding, which corresponds pretty well with the swift, as does also the period of their arrival. Each species is usually seen about the beginning of May; each breeds but once in a summer; each lays only two eggs.

July 4, 1790.—The woman who brought me two fern-owl's eggs last year, on July 14, on this day produced me two more, one of which had been laid this morning, as appears plainly, because there was only one in the nest the evening before. They were found, as last July, on the verge of the Down above the Hermitage, under a beechen shrub, on the naked ground. Last year, those eggs were full of young, and just ready to be hatched.

These circumstances point out the exact time when these curious nocturnal migratory birds lay their eggs and hatch their young.* Fern-owls, like snipes, stone-curlews, and some other birds, make no nests. Birds that build on the ground do not make much of nests. WHITE.

No author that I am acquainted with has given so accurate and pleasing an account of the manners and habits of the goat-sucker as Mr. White, taken entirely from his own observations. Its being a nocturnal bird, has prevented my having many opportunities of observing it. I suspect that it passes the day in concealment amidst the dark and shady gloom of deep-wooded dells, or, as they are called here, gills; having more than once seen it roused from such solitary places by my dogs, when shooting in the day-time. I have

* The fern-owl arrives one of the last of our migratory birds, and it has been known to remain in this country till late in November. I disturbed a pair of these birds on a bright sunny day as they were sitting on a stunted oak tree at the edge of some boggy ground in Wales. They made a short flight, and appeared stupified and unconscious of any danger. It is to be regretted that they should be wantonly destroyed, for they are very useful in devouring numbers of chaffers.—ED.



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also sometimes seen it in an evening, but not long enough to take notice of its habits and manners. I have never seen it but in the summer, between the months of May and September. MARKWICK.

SAND-MARTINS.—March 23, 1788.—A gentleman, who was this week on a visit at Waverley, took the opportunity of examining some of the holes in the sand-banks with which that district abounds. As these are undoubtedly bored by bank-martins, and are the places where they avowedly breed, he was in hopes they might have slept there also, and that he might have surprised them just as they were awaking from their winter slumbers. When he had dug for some time, he found the holes were horizontal and serpentine, as I had observed before; and that the nests were deposited at the inner end, and had been occupied by broods in former summers; but no torpid birds were to be found. He opened and examined about a dozen holes. Another gentleman made the same search many years ago, with as little success. These holes were in depth about two feet.*

March 21, 1790.—A single bank or sand-martin was seen hovering and playing round the sand-pit at Short Heath, where in the summer they abound.

April 9, 1793.—A sober hind assures us, that this day, on Wish-Hanger Common, between Hedleigh and Frinsham, he saw several bank-martins playing in and out, and hanging before some nest holes in a sand hill, where these birds usually nestle.

This incident confirms my suspicions that this species of *hirundo* is to be seen first of any; and gives great reason to suppose that they do not leave their wild haunts at all, but are secreted amidst the clefts and caverns of those abrupt cliffs where they usually spend their summers.

The late severe weather considered, it is not very probable

* I am not sure that the habits of the little sand-martin (*Hirundo riparia*) do not interest me more than those of the swallow. They excavate their holes in sunny sand-banks with wonderful rapidity, and dart in and out of them in a way peculiarly pleasing, and which I am never tired of watching. When the male and female are resting for a few moments, in the recesses of their sandy retreat, their gentle notes of love and affection may be heard, and then they resume their rapid and "joyous" flight.—ED.

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that these birds should have migrated so early from a tropical region, through all these cutting winds and pinching frosts: but it is easy to suppose that they may, like bats and flies, have been awakened by the influence of the sun amidst their secret *latebræ*, where they have spent the uncomfortable foodless months in a torpid state, and the profoundest of slumbers.

There is a large pond at Wish-Hanger, which induces these sand-martins to frequent that district. For I have ever remarked that they haunt near great waters, either rivers or lakes. WHITE.

Here, and in many other passages of his writings, this very ingenious naturalist favours the opinion that part, at least, of the swallow tribe pass their winter in a torpid state, in the same manner as bats and flies, and revive again on the approach of spring.

I have frequently taken notice of all these circumstances, which induced Mr. White to suppose that some of the *hirundines* lie torpid during winter. I have seen, so late as November, on a finer day than usual at that season of the year, two or three swallows flying backwards and forwards under a warm hedge, or on the sunny side of some old building; nay, I once saw, on the 8th of December, two martins flying about very briskly, the weather being mild. I had not seen any considerable number, either of swallows or martins, for a good while before: from whence, then, could these few birds come, if not from some hole or cavern where they had laid themselves up for the winter? Surely it will not be asserted that these birds migrate back again, from some distant tropical region, merely on the appearance of a fine day or two at this late season of the year. Again, very early in the spring, and sometimes immediately after very cold, severe weather, on its growing a little warmer, a few of these birds suddenly make their appearance, long before the generality of them are seen. These appearances certainly favour the opinion of their passing the winter in a torpid state, but do not absolutely prove the fact; for who ever saw them reviving of their own accord from their torpid state, without being first brought to the fire, and, as it were, forced into life again; soon after which revivification, they constantly die. MARKWICK.

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SWALLOWS, CONGREGATING AND DISAPPEARANCE OF.*—During the severe winds that often prevail late in the spring, it is not easy to say how the *hirundines* subsist; for they withdraw themselves, and are hardly ever seen, nor do any insects appear for their support. That they can retire to rest, and sleep away these uncomfortable periods, as bats do, is a matter rather to be suspected than proved: or do they not rather spend their time in deep and sheltered vales near waters, where insects are more likely to be found? Certain it is, that hardly any individuals of this genus have, at such times, been seen for several days together.

September 13, 1791.—The congregating flocks of *hirundines* on the church and tower are very beautiful and amusing! When they fly off together from the roof, on any alarm, they quite swarm in the air. But they soon settle in heaps, and, preening their feathers, and lifting up their wings to admit the sun, seem highly to enjoy the warm situation. Thus they spend the heat of the day, preparing for their emigration, and, as it were, consulting when and where they are to go. The flight about the church seems to consist chiefly of house-martins, about four hundred in number: but there are other places of rendezvous about the village frequented at the same time.

It is remarkable, that though most of them sit on the battlements and roof, yet many hang or cling for some time by their claws against the surface of the walls, in a manner not practised by them at any other time of their remaining with us.

The swallows seem to delight more in holding their assemblies on trees.†

November 3, 1789.—Two swallows were seen this morning at Newton Vicarage House, hovering and settling on the roofs and out-buildings. None have been observed at Selborne since October 11. It is very remarkable, that after

* A correspondent informs me that he has observed that when a large number of swallows have congregated in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, they have suddenly disappeared, but, upon a strong gale of wind arising, they have as suddenly reassembled till the gale was over.—ED.

† On the 2nd and 3rd of December, 1842, several swallows were seen flying about some of the towers of Windsor Castle; the thermometer then was 48, and the wind S.S.W.—ED.

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the *hirundines* have disappeared for some weeks, a few are occasionally seen again; sometimes, in the first week in November, and that only for one day. Do they not withdraw and slumber in some hiding-place during the interval? for we cannot suppose they had migrated to warmer climes, and so returned again for one day. Is it not more probable that they are awakened from sleep, and, like the bats, are come forth to collect a little food?* Bats appear at all

* Concerning swallows, the reader will see, that Mr. White appears to incline more and more in favour of their *torpidity*, and against their *migration*. Mr. D. Barrington is still more positive on the same side of the question. See his *Miscellanies*, p. 225. The ancients generally mention this bird as wintering in Africa. See *Anacreon*, λγ. ed. Brunk. p. 38. The Rhodians had a festival called χελιδόνια, when the boys brought about young swallows: the song which they sang may be seen in the works of Meursius, v. iii. p. 974. fol.

Ἦλθε, Ἦλθε, χελιδὼν καλὰς
Ὥρας ἄγουσα, καὶ καλοὺς Ἐνιαυτούς
Ἐπὶ γαστέρα λευκὰ κ' ὄπι νῶτα μέλαινα.

"He comes! He comes! who loves to bear
Soft sunny hours and seasons fair;
The swallow hither comes to rest
His sable wings and snowy breast."

And, alluding to this custom, Avienus (who may be considered only as a very bad translator of an excellent poem, the *Periegesis* of Dionysius,) thus says, v. 705,

"Nam cum vere novo, tellus se dura relaxat,
Culminibusque cavis, blandum strepit ales hirundo,
Gens devota choros agitat!"

When the hard earth grows soft in early spring,
And on our roofs the noisy swallows sing.

From a passage in the *Birds* of Aristophanes, we learn, that among the Greeks, the crane pointed out the time of sowing; the arrival of the kite, the time of sheep-shearing; and the swallow the time to put on summer clothes. According to the *Greek Calendar of Flora*, kept by Theophrastus at Athens, the Ornithian winds blow, and the swallow comes, between the 28th of February and the 12th of March; the kite and nightingale appear between the 11th and 26th of March; the cuckoo appears at the same time the young figs come out; thence his name. See STILLINGFLEET's *Tracts on Natural History*, p. 324.

Mr. White says, p. 148, it is strange that rooks and starlings accompany each other: but this is the case with other birds; the short-eared owl often accompanies flights of woodcocks in this country. See PENNANT's *Scotland*, i. p. 11. In Greece, the cuckoo migrates with the turtle flocks, thence they call him *trigonokractes*, or turtle-leader.—MITFORD.

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seasons through the autumn and spring months, when the thermometer is at 50, because then *phalænæ* and moths are stirring. These swallows looked like young ones.

WHITE.

Of their migration, the proofs are such as will scarcely admit of a doubt. Sir Charles Wager and Captain Wright saw vast flocks of them at sea,* when on their passage from one country to another. Our author, Mr. White, saw what he deemed the actual migration of these birds, and which he has described at p. 78 of his *History of Selborne;* and of their congregating together on the roofs of churches and other buildings, and on trees, previous to their departure, many instances occur; particularly, I once observed a large flock of house-martins on the roof of the church here at Catsfield, which acted exactly in the manner here described by Mr. White, sometimes preening their feathers, and spreading their wings to the sun, and then flying off all together, but soon returning to their former situation. The greatest part of these birds seemed to be young ones.

MARKWICK.

WAGTAILS.—While the cows are feeding in the moist low pasture, broods of wagtails, white and grey, run round them, close up to their noses, and under their very bellies, availing themselves of the flies that settle on their legs, and probably finding worms and *larvæ* that are roused by the trampling of their feet. Nature is such an economist, that

* I have had so many facts sent me of vast flocks of swallows having been seen at sea, and also of their settling on the rigging of ships, that the proofs of their migration cannot be doubted. Indeed I have frequently witnessed their departure from, and, in one instance, their arrival in this country. In the latter case they settled on the ground in Kew Park, about 11 o'clock in the morning, and were so much exhausted, that they suffered me to ride close to them. This was in April. The strong propensity of migratory birds to leave and return at the appointed season, plainly demonstrates that this unvarying principle within them is an instinct given them by a beneficent Creator at the very time best adapted for their flight, and which is apparently irresistible. Indeed, they seem to migrate as by a sudden impulse, and neither sooner or later than is expedient, almost at the same time yearly; so that up to the hour of their flight, and as long as it is needful to stay for their preservation, they appear to have no thought of departure.—ED.

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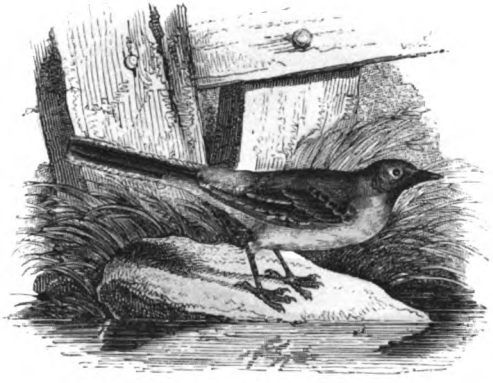

THE GREY WAGTAIL.

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the most incongruous animals can avail themselves of each other! Interest makes strange friendships. WHITE.

Birds continually avail themselves of particular and unusual circumstances to procure their food; thus wagtails keep playing about the noses and legs of cattle as they feed, in quest of flies and other insects which abound near those animals; and great numbers of them will follow close to the plough to devour the worms, &c., that are turned up by that instrument. The red-breast attends the gardener in digging his borders; and will, with great familiarity and tameness, pick out the worms almost close to his spade, as I have frequently seen.* Starlings and magpies very often sit on the backs of sheep and deer to pick out their ticks.

MARKWICK.

WRYNECKS.—These birds appear on the grass-plots and walks; they walk a little as well as hop, and thrust their bills into the turf, in quest, I conclude, of ants, which are their food. While they hold their bills in the grass, they draw our their prey with their tongues, which are so long as to be coiled round their heads. WHITE.

GROSBEAK.—Mr. B. shot a cock grosbeak, which he had observed to haunt his garden for more than a fortnight. I began to accuse this bird of making sad havoc among the buds of the cherries, gooseberries, and wall-fruit of all the neighbouring orchards. Upon opening its crop, or craw, no buds were to be seen; but a mass of kernels of the stones of fruits. Mr. B. observed, that this bird frequented the spot where plum-trees grow; and that he had seen it with somewhat hard in its mouth, which it broke with difficulty; these were the stones of damsons. The Latin ornithologists call this bird *coccothraustes*, i. e. berry-breaker, because with its large horny beak it cracks and breaks the shells of stone fruits for the sake of the seed or kernel. Birds of this sort are rarely seen in England, and only in winter.

WHITE.

* Rooks may be seen following close upon a plough at work, to feed upon any grubs or worms which may be turned up.—ED.

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I have never seen this rare bird but during the severest cold of the hardest winters: at which season of the year, I have had in my possession two or three that were killed in this neighbourhood in different years. MARKWICK.

OWLS.—Mr. White has observed, p. 159, that the owl returns to its young with food once in five minutes. Mr. Montague has observed, that the wren returns once in two minutes, or, upon an average, thirty-six times in an hour; and this continued full sixteen hours in a day, which, if equally divided between eight young ones, each would receive seventy-two feeds in the day, the whole amounting to five hundred and seventy-six. See *Ornitholog. Dict.* p. 35. To this I will add, that the swallow never fails to return to its nest at the expiration of every second or third minute.
MITFORD.

CUCKOOS.—Since Mr. White's time, much has been added to our knowledge of the cuckoo, by the patient attention of Dr. Jenner. Concerning the singing of the cuckoo, mentioned by Mr. White, at p. 140, I will add the following curious memoranda from the 7th volume of the *Transactions of the Linnæan Society*. "The cuckoo begins early in the season with the interval of a minor third, the bird then proceeds to a major third, next to a fourth, then a fifth, after which his voice breaks without attaining a minor sixth." This curious circumstance was, however, observed very long ago; and it forms the subject of an epigram in that scarce black-letter volume, the *Epigrams* of John Heywood, 1587. MITFORD.

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# OBSERVATIONS ON QUADRUPEDS.

SHEEP.—The sheep on the downs this winter (1769) are very ragged, and their coats much torn; the shepherds say, they tear their fleeces with their own mouths and horns, and they are always in that way in mild wet winters, being teased and tickled with a kind of lice.

After ewes and lambs are shorn, there is great confusion and bleating, neither the dams nor the young being able to distinguish one another as before. This embarrassment seems not so much to arise from the loss of the fleece, which may occasion an alteration in their appearance, as from the defect of that *notus odor*, discriminating each individual personally: which also is confounded by the strong scent of the pitch and tar wherewith they are newly marked; for the brute creation recognise each other more from the smell than the sight; and in matters of identity and diversity, appeal much more to their noses than their eyes. After sheep have been washed, there is the same confusion, from the reason given above. WHITE.

RABBITS.—Rabbits make incomparably the finest turf, for they not only bite closer than larger quadrupeds,* but they

* It has been generally supposed that wild rabbits will not become domesticated. The following interesting account of one, communicated to me by a lady, will afford a proof to the contrary:—

"One evening last spring my dog barked at something behind a flower-pot that stood in the door-porch. I thought a toad was there, but it proved to be a very young rabbit, a wild one. The poor thing was in a state of great exhaustion as if it had been chased, and had been a long while without food. It was quiet in the hand and allowed a little warm milk to be put into its mouth. Upon being wrapt in flannel and placed in a basket by the fire, it soon went to sleep. When it awoke, more milk was offered in a small spoon, which this time was sucked with right good will; and the little creature continued to take the milk in this way for several days, until strong enough to help itself out of a cup. It appeared to become tame immediately, soon learnt its name, and I never saw a happier or merrier little pet. Its gambols on the carpet were full of fun. When tired with play, it would feed on the

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allow no bents to rise; hence warrens produce much the most delicate turf for gardens. Sheep never touch the stalks of grasses.* WHITE.

green food and nice bits placed there for it, and, when satisfied, it used to climb up the skirt of the dress, nestle in the lap or under the arm, and go to sleep. If this indulgence could not be permitted, then Bunny (as we called it) would spring into my work-basket, and take a nap there. At mid-day it liked to sit in the sun on the window-seat, then it would clean its fur and long ears, each being separately drawn down, and held by one foot while brushed by the other. This duty performed, it would stretch at full length, and basking in the sun-beams fall asleep. Strange to tell, all this was going on with the dog in the room, who had been made to understand that the rabbit was not to be touched; stranger still, the rabbit ceased to show any fear of the dog; but, on the contrary, delighted in jumping on the dog's back and running after his tail. These liberties, however, were not pleasing to Jewel: they were evidently only endured in obedience to the commands of his mistress. Not approving of one favourite being made happy at the other's expense, I was obliged to interfere upon these occasions, and call Bunny to order.

"Being frequently told that a wild rabbit could not be so thoroughly domesticated, but that it would return to the woods if it regained its liberty, I feared that if mine got loose it would certainly run away. Yet I wished it should be sometimes in the garden to feed upon such green food as it liked best: for this purpose I fastened it with a collar and small chain, and, thus secured, led it about. One evening the chain unfortunately broke, and Bunny was free! At first we saw it running from place to place with wild delight, but after a little while we could not see it, and we hunted in vain under the shrubs, calling it by name, until it became dark; we then ceased to search any longer, and I concluded my pretty pet was gone.

"Before retiring for the night, I gave a last look out of the window, in the hope I might chance to see it once more. The moon was then shining brightly, and I distinctly saw my little rabbit sitting at the door with head and ears erect, as if listening for its friends within, anxious, perhaps, for its accustomed nice supper and soft warm bed. I hastened down stairs to let it in, calling it by name, when, the moment I opened the door, a strange cat darted forward, seized it by the neck, and bore it screaming away! Of course every effort of mine was useless to overtake the cat.

"I feel convinced that this fond little creature would not have left us, to return to the wood. That it did not come when called, was the effect of excessive joy for its newly found freedom, which must have been doubly delightful while we were near, as no doubt it saw us when we could not see it, and was only quietly feeding when we thought it was gone away.

"Four months must have been the extent of poor Bunny's short life."—ED.

* This is a wise and beautiful provision of Providence. If sheep, or indeed any quadrupeds were to feed on the stalks of grasses, the seed vessels would be destroyed, and, consequently, the turf would not be renovated from time to time. In order to guard against their destruction, the stalks are very bitter. (See Rabbits.)—ED.

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CAT AND SQUIRRELS.—A boy has taken three little young squirrels in their nest, or drey,* as it is called in these parts. These small creatures he put under the care of a cat who had lately lost her kittens, and finds that she nurses and suckles them with the same assiduity and affection as if they were her own offspring.† This circumstance corroborates my suspicion, that the mention of exposed and deserted children being nurtured by female beasts of prey who had lost their young, may not be so improbable an incident as many have supposed; and therefore may be a justification of those authors who have gravely mentioned, what some have deemed to be a wild and improbable story.

So many people went to see the little squirrels suckled by a cat, that the foster mother became jealous of her charge, and in pain for their safety; and therefore hid them over the ceiling, where one died. This circumstance shows her affection for these foundlings, and that she supposed the squirrels to be her own young. Thus hens, when they have hatched ducklings, are equally attached to them as if they were their own chickens. WHITE.

HORSE.—An old hunting mare, which ran on the common, being taken very ill, ran down into the village, as it were, to implore the help of men, and died the night following in the street. WHITE.

HOUNDS.—The king's stag hounds came down to Alton, attended by a huntsman and six yeomen prickers, with horns, to try for the stag that has haunted Harteley Wood for so long a time. Many hundreds of people, horse and foot, attended the dogs to see the deer unharboured; but though the huntsman drew Harteley Wood, and Long Coppice, and Shrubwood, and Temple Hangers, and, in their way back, Harteley and Ward-le-ham Hangers, yet no stag could be found.

* The squirrel's nest is not only called a drey in Hampshire, but also in other counties; in Suffolk it is called a bay. The word "drey," though now provincial, I have met with in some of our old writers.—MITFORD.

† A fox that had lost her cubs, stole and suckled one of the puppies of a sheep dog, in the north of England. It was dug out of the fox's earth, and is now the constant companion and retriever of an officer in the Life Guards.—ED.

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The royal pack, accustomed to have the deer turned out before them, never drew the coverts with any address and spirit, as many people that were present observed; and this remark the event has proved to be a true one: for as a person was lately pursuing a pheasant that was wing-broken, in Harteley Wood, he stumbled upon the stag by accident, and ran in upon him as he lay concealed amidst a thick brake of brambles and bushes. WHITE.

## OBSERVATIONS ON INSECTS AND VERMES.

### INSECTS IN GENERAL.

THE day and night insects occupy the annuals alternately; the *papilios*, *muscæ*, and *apes*, are succeeded at the close of day by *phalænæ*, earwigs, woodlice, &c. In the dusk of the evening, when beetles begin to buzz, partridges begin to call: these two circumstances are exactly coincident.

Ivy is the last flower that supports the hymenopterous and dipterous insects. On sunny days, quite on to November, they swarm on trees covered with this plant; and when they disappear, probably retire under the shelter of its leaves, concealing themselves between its fibres and the trees which it entwines. WHITE.

This I have often observed, having seen bees and other winged insects swarming about the flowers of the ivy very late in the autumn. MARKWICK.

Spiders, woodlice, *lepismæ* in cupboards and among sugar, some *empedes*, gnats, flies of several species, some *phalænæ* in hedges, earth-worms, &c., are stirring at all times, when winters are mild; and are of great service to those soft-billed birds that never leave us.

On every sunny day, the winter through, clouds of insects, usually called gnats (I suppose *tipulæ* and *empedes*), appear sporting and dancing over the tops of the evergreen trees in

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the shrubbery, and frisking about as if the business of generation was still going on. Hence it appears that these *diptera* (which by their sizes appear to be of different species) are not subject to a torpid state in the winter, as most winged insects are. At night, and in frosty weather, and when it rains and blows, they seem to retire into those trees. They often are out in a fog. WHITE.

This I have also seen, and have frequently observed swarms of little winged insects playing up and down in the air in the middle of the winter, even when the ground has been covered with snow. MARKWICK.

HUMMING IN THE AIR.—There is a natural occurrence to be met with upon the highest part of our down in hot summer days, which always amuses me much, without giving me any satisfaction with respect to the cause of it; and that is, a loud audible humming of bees in the air, though not one insect is to be seen. This sound is to be heard distinctly the whole common through, from the Money-dells, to Mr. White's avenue gate. Any person would suppose that a large swarm of bees was in motion, and playing about over his head. This noise was heard last week, on June 28th.

> "Resounds the living surface of the ground,
> Nor undelightful is the ceaseless *hum*
> To him who muses ——— at noon.——
> Thick in yon stream of light, a thousand ways,
> Upward and downward, thwarting and convolv'd,
> The quivering nations sport."—THOMSON'S *Seasons*.
>
> WHITE.

CHAFFERS.—Cockchaffers* seldom abound oftener than once in three or four years; when they swarm, they deface the trees and hedges. Whole woods of oaks are stripped bare by them.

Chaffers are eaten by the turkey, the rook, and the house-sparrow.†

* Farmers have told me that when chaffers abound, they fall from trees and hedges on the backs of the sheep, where, becoming entangled in the wool, they die, and being blown by flies, fill the sheep with maggots.—ED.

† Rooks destroy an immense number of chaffers, not only in the grub

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The *scarabæus solstitialis* first appears about June 26th: they are very punctual in their coming out every year. They are a small species, about half the size of a May-chaffer, and are known in some parts by the name of the fern-chaffer.

WHITE.

A singular circumstance relative to the cockchaffer, or, as it is called here, the May-bug (*scarabæus melolontha*), happened this year (1800):—My gardener, in digging some ground, found, about six inches under the surface, two of these insects alive and perfectly formed, so early as the 24th of March. When he brought them to me, they appeared to be as perfect and as much alive as in the midst of summer, crawling about as briskly as ever: yet I saw no more of this insect till the 22nd of May, when it began to make its appearance. How comes it, that though it was perfectly formed so early as the 24th of March,* it did not show itself above ground till nearly two months afterwards?

MARKWICK.

PTINUS PECTINICORNIS.—Those maggots that make worm-holes in tables, chairs, bed-posts, &c., and destroy wooden furniture, especially where there is any sap, are the *larvæ* of the *ptinus pectinicornis*. This insect, it is probable, deposits its eggs on the surface, and the worms eat their way in.

In their holes, they turn into their *pupæ* state, and so come forth winged in July: eating their way through the

state, but when they have arrived at maturity, for I have frequently observed them in search of them on trees and hedges. Mr. White recommends that a rook should be shot weekly the year through, and its crop examined in order to discover whether upon the whole they do more harm or good, from the contents at various periods. Though his experiment might show that these birds occasionally injure corn and turnips, yet their continual consumption of grubs, and wire-worms, and other noxious insects would greatly preponderate in their favour. In fact, I believe rooks to be great friends to the farmer, and it is to be regretted that they are often so wantonly destroyed.—ED.

* I have often observed this fact, and also ascertained that the perfectly formed chaffer never comes forth till the leaves are on the trees, which they are not so early as the 24th of March. This is an interesting fact, and shows how kindly Providence has instilled even into insects the means of self-preservation.—ED.

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valances or curtains of a bed, or any other furniture that happens to obstruct their passage.

They seem to be most inclined to breed in beech; hence beech will not make lasting utensils or furniture. If their eggs are deposited on the surface, frequent rubbing will preserve wooden furniture. WHITE.

BLATTA ORIENTALIS (COCKROACH).—A neighbour complained to me that her house was overrun with a kind of black beetle, or, as she expressed herself, with a kind of black-bob, which swarmed in her kitchen when they got up in the morning before daybreak.

Soon after this account, I observed an unusual insect in one of my dark chimney closets, and find since, that in the night they swarm also in my kitchen. On examination, I soon ascertained the species to be the *blatta orientalis* of Linnæus, and the *blatta molendinaria* of Mouffet. The male is winged; the female is not, but shows somewhat like the rudiments of wings, as if in the *pupa* state.

These insects belonged originally to the warmer parts of America, and were conveyed from thence by shipping to the East Indies; and, by means of commerce, begin to prevail in the more northern parts of Europe, as Russia, Sweden, &c. How long they have abounded in England I cannot say; but have never observed them in my house till lately.

They love warmth, and haunt chimney closets and the backs of ovens. Poda says that these and house-crickets will not associate together; but he is mistaken in that assertion, as Linnæus suspected he was. They are altogether night-insects, *lucifugæ*, never coming forth till the rooms are dark and still, and escaping away nimbly at the approach of a candle. Their antennæ are remarkably long, slender, and flexile.

October, 1790.—After the servants are gone to bed, the kitchen hearth swarms with young crickets, and young *blattæ molendinariæ* of all sizes, from the most minute growth to their full proportions. They seem to live in a friendly manner together, and not to prey the one on the other.

August, 1792.—After the destruction of many thousands of *blattæ molendinariæ*, we find that at intervals a fresh detachment of old ones arrives, and particularly during this



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hot season; for, the windows being left open in the evenings, the males come flying in at the casements from the neighbouring houses, which swarm with them. How the females, that seem to have no perfect wings that they can use, can contrive to get from house to house, does not so readily appear. These, like many insects, when they find their present abodes overstocked, have powers of migrating to fresh quarters. Since the *blattæ* have been so much kept under, the crickets have greatly increased in number. WHITE.

GRYLLUS DOMESTICUS (HOUSE CRICKET).—November.—After the servants are gone to bed, the kitchen hearth swarms with minute crickets, not so large as fleas, which must have been lately hatched. So that these domestic insects, cherished by the influence of a constant large fire, regard not the season of the year, but produce their young at a time when their congeners are either dead or laid up for the winter, to pass away the uncomfortable months in the profoundest slumbers, and a state of torpidity.

When house-crickets are out and running about in a room in the night, if surprised by a candle, they give two or three shrill notes, as it were for a signal to their fellows, that they may escape to their crannies and lurking holes, to avoid danger. WHITE.

CIMEX LINEARIS.*—August 12, 1775.—*Cimices lineares* are now in high copulation on ponds and pools. The females, who vastly exceed the males in bulk, dart and shoot along on the surface of the water with the males on their backs. When a female chooses to be disengaged, she rears, and jumps, and plunges like an unruly colt; the lover, thus dismounted, soon finds a new mate. The females, as fast as their curiosities are satisfied, retire to another part of the lake, perhaps to deposit their fœtus in quiet; hence the sexes are found

* The egg of the long water-bug, Mr. Bennett informs us, has been sufficiently known for many years. It is armed at one end with two bristles, and is inserted into the stem of an aquatic plant, generally of a club-rush, in which it is so deeply immersed by the aid of the lengthened ovipositor of the insect, as to be entirely hidden from view; the bristles alone project from the place of concealment. The object of this curious arrangement is among the most beautiful and beneficent of the provisions of Nature.

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separate, except where generation is going on. From the multitude of minute young of all gradations of sizes, these insects seem without doubt to be viviparous. WHITE.

PHALÆNA QUERCUS.—Most of our oaks are naked of leaves, and even the Holt in general, having been ravaged by the caterpillars of a small *phalæna*, which is of a pale yellow colour. These insects, though a feeble race, yet, from their infinite numbers, are of wonderful effect, being able to destroy the foliage of whole forests and districts. At this season they leave their *aurelia*, and issue forth in their fly state, swarming and covering the trees and hedges.

In a field near Greatham I saw a flight of swifts busied in catching their prey near the ground; and found they were hawking after these *phalænæ*. The *aurelia* of this moth is shining, and as black as jet; and lies wrapped up in a leaf of the tree, which is rolled round it, and secured at the ends by a web, to prevent the maggot from falling out. WHITE.

I suspect that the insect here meant is not the *phalæna quercus*, but the *phalæna viridata*, concerning which I find the following note in my *Naturalist's Calendar* for the year 1785:—

About this time, and for a few days last past, I observed the leaves of almost all the oak trees in Denn copse to be eaten and destroyed, and, on examining more narrowly, saw an infinite number of small beautiful pale green moths flying about the trees; the leaves of which, that were not quite destroyed, were curled up, and withinside were the *exuviæ*, or remains, of the *chrysalis*, from whence I suppose the moths had issued, and whose caterpillar had eaten the leaves.

MARKWICK.

EPHEMERA CAUDA BISETA (MAY FLY).*—June 10, 1771. Myriads of May flies appeared for the first time on the

* The most extraordinary appearance of May flies I ever witnessed was on the Colne at Denham near Uxbridge, the hospitable seat of the late John Drummond, Esq. The air was full of them, and the water covered by them. The whole scene was equally beautiful and surprising, and I have no doubt but that my old angling-friend, Richard Penn, Esq., will recollect the day and the occurrence.—ED.



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Alresford stream. The air was crowded with them, and the surface of the water covered. Large trouts sucked them in as they lay struggling on the surface of the stream, unable to rise till their wings were dried.

This appearance reconciled me in some measure to the wonderful account that Scopoli gives of the quantities emerging from the rivers of Carniola. Their motions are very peculiar, up and down for many yards almost in a perpendicular line. WHITE.

I once saw a swarm of these insects playing up and down over the surface of a pond in Denn park, exactly in the manner described by this accurate naturalist. It was late in the evening of a warm summer day when I observed them. MARKWICK.

SPHYNX OCELLATA.—A vast insect appears after it is dusk, flying with a humming noise, and inserting its tongue into the bloom of the honeysuckle; it scarcely settles upon the plants, but feeds on the wing in the manner of humming-birds. WHITE.

I have frequently seen the large bee-moth* (*sphynx stellatarum*) inserting its long tongue, or proboscis, into the centre of flowers, and feeding on their nectar without settling on them, but keeping constantly on the wing. MARKWICK.

WILD BEE.†—There is a sort of wild bee frequenting the garden-campion for the sake of its tomentum, which probably it turns to some purpose in the business of nidification. It

* This sphynx may almost be thought to be a link between the humming-bird and an insect. It is very wild and by no means common in my own neighbourhood.—ED.

† The mention of bees reminds me of the following pleasing lines of Pope :—

"The happy bees that with the spring renew
Their flowery toil, and sip the fragrant dew,
When the wing'd colonies first tempt the sky,
O'er dusky fields and shaded waters fly,
Or settling, seize the sweets the blossom yields
And a low murmur runs along the fields."—ED.

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is very pleasant to see with what address it strips off the *pubes*, running from the top to the bottom of a branch, and shaving it bare with all the dexterity of a hoop shaver. When it has got a vast bundle, almost as large as itself, it flies away, holding it secure between its chin and its fore legs.

There is a remarkable hill on the downs near Lewes, in Sussex, known by the name of Mount Carburn, which overlooks that town, and affords a most engaging prospect of all the country round, besides several views of the sea. On the very summit of this exalted promontory, and amidst the trenches of its Danish camp, there haunts a species of wild bee, making its nest in the chalky soil. When people approach the place, these insects begin to be alarmed, and, with a sharp and hostile sound, dash and strike round the heads and faces of intruders. I have often been interrupted myself, while contemplating the grandeur of the scenery around me, and have thought myself in danger of being stung.* WHITE.

WASPS.—Wasps abound in woody wild districts, far from neighbourhoods. They feed on flowers, and catch flies and caterpillars to carry to their young. Wasps make their nests with the raspings of sound timber; hornets with what they gnaw from decayed. These particles of wood are kneaded up with a mixture of saliva from their bodies, and moulded into combs.

When there is no fruit in the gardens, wasps eat flies, and suck the honey from flowers, from ivy-blossoms, and umbellated plants. They carry off also flesh from the butchers' shambles. WHITE.

In the year 1775, wasps abounded so prodigiously in this neighbourhood, that, in the month of August, no less than seven or eight of their nests were ploughed up in one field; of which there were several instances, as I was informed.

In the spring, about the beginning of April, a single wasp is sometimes seen, which is of a larger size than usual.

* Mr. White had some cause for his apprehension, for these bees sting very severely.—ED.

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This, I imagine, is the queen,* or female wasp, the mother of the future swarm. MARKWICK.

ŒSTRUS CURVICAUDA.—This insect lays its nits, or eggs, on horses' legs, flanks, &c. each on a single hair. The maggots, when hatched, do not enter the horses' skins, but fall to the ground. It seems to abound most in moist, moorish places, though sometimes seen in the uplands. WHITE.

NOSE FLY.—About the beginning of July, a species of fly (*musca*) obtains, which proves very tormenting to horses, trying still to enter their nostrils and ears, and actually laying their eggs in the latter of those organs, or perhaps in both. When these abound, horses in woodland districts become very impatient at their work, continually tossing their heads, and rubbing their noses on each other, regardless of the driver; so that accidents often ensue. In the heat of the day, men are often obliged to desist from ploughing. Saddle-horses are also very troublesome at such seasons. Country people call this insect the nose fly.
WHITE.

Is not this insect the *œstrus nasalis* of Linnæus, so well described by Mr. Clark, in the third volume of the *Linnean Transactions*, under the name of *œstrus veterinus?*
MARKWICK.

ICHNEUMON FLY.—I saw lately a small ichneumon fly attack a spider much larger than itself, on a grass walk. When the spider made any resistance, the ichneumon applied her tail to him, and stung him with great vehemence, so that he soon became dead and motionless. The ichneumon then running backwards, drew her prey very nimbly over the walk into the standing grass. This spider would be deposited in some hole where the ichneumon would lay some eggs; and as soon as the eggs were hatched, the carcase would afford ready food for the maggots.

* In Mr. White's MSS., he mentions that he used to give a reward to boys who brought him these female wasps in the spring, knowing that each of them would be the parent of a new colony.—ED.

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Perhaps some eggs might be injected into the body of the spider, in the act of stinging. Some ichneumons deposit their eggs in the *aurelia* of moths and butterflies.

WHITE.

In my *Naturalist's Calendar* for 1795, July 21st, I find the following note:—

It is not uncommon for some of the species of ichneumon flies to deposit their eggs in the chrysalis of a butterfly. Some time ago, I put two of the chrysales of a butterfly into a box, and covered it with gauze, to discover what species of butterfly they would produce; but instead of a butterfly, one of them produced a number of small ichneumon flies.

There are many instances of the great service these little insects are to mankind in reducing the number of noxious insects, by depositing their eggs in the soft bodies of their *larvæ;* but none more remarkable than that of the ichneumon *tipula,* which pierces the tender body and deposits its eggs in the *larva* of the *tipula tritici,* an insect which, when it abounds greatly, is very prejudicial to the grains of wheat. This operation I have frequently seen it perform with wonder and delight. MARKWICK.

BOMBYLIUS MEDIUS.—The *bombylius medius* is much about in March and the beginning of April, and soon seems to retire. It is a hairy insect, like a humble-bee, but with only two wings, and a long straight beak, with which it sucks the early flowers. The female seems to lay its eggs as it poises on its wings, by striking its tail on the ground, and against the grass that stands in its way, in a quick manner, for several times together. WHITE.

I have often seen this insect fly with great velocity, stop on a sudden, hang in the air in a stationary position for some time, and then fly off again; but do not recollect having ever seen it strike its tail against the ground, or any other substance. MARKWICK.

MUSCÆ (FLIES.)*—In the decline of the year, when the

* Three species of English house-flies have now been introduced into

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mornings and evenings become chilly, many species of flies (*muscæ*) retire into houses, and swarm in the windows.

At first they are very brisk and alert; but, as they grow more torpid, one cannot help observing that they move with difficulty, and are scarce able to lift their legs, which seem as if glued to the glass; and, by degrees, many do actually stick on till they die in the place.

It has been observed that divers flies, besides their sharp hooked nails, have also skinny palms or flaps to their feet whereby they are enabled to stick on glass and other smooth bodies, and to walk on ceilings with their backs downward, by means of the pressure of the atmosphere on those flaps; the weight of which they easily overcome in warm weather, when they are brisk and alert. But, in the decline of the year, this resistance becomes too mighty for their diminished strength; and we see flies labouring along, and lugging their feet in windows, as if they stuck fast to the glass, and it is with the utmost difficulty they can draw one foot after another, and disengage their hollow caps from the slippery surface.

Upon the same principle that flies stick and support themselves, do boys, by way of play, carry heavy weights by only a piece of wet leather, at the end of a string, clapped close on the surface of a stone. WHITE.

TIPULÆ, OR EMPEDES.—May.—Millions of *empedes*, or *tipulæ*, come forth at the close of day, and swarm to such a degree as to fill the air. At this juncture they sport and copulate; as it grows more dark, they retire. All day they hide in the hedges. As they rise in a cloud, they appear like smoke.

I do not ever remember to have seen such swarms, except in the fens of the Isle of Ely. They appear most over grass grounds. WHITE.

APHIDES.—On the first of August, about half an hour after three in the afternoon, the people of Selborne were

Australia, where they promise soon to be a complete pest. Nature does not appear to have made any provision to guard against this great increase of insects by means of insectivorous birds.—ED.

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surprised by a shower of *aphides*, which fell in these parts. They who were walking the streets at that time, found themselves covered with these insects, which settled also on the trees and gardens, and blackened all the vegetables where they alighted. These armies, no doubt, were then in a state of emigration, and shifting their quarters; and might, perhaps, come from the great hop plantations of Kent or Sussex, the wind being that day at north. They were observed at the same time at Farnham, and all along the Vale at Alton.

WHITE.

ANTS.*—August 23.—Every ant-hill, about this time, is in a strange hurry and confusion; and all the winged ants, agitated by some violent impulse, are leaving their homes, and, bent on emigration, swarm by myriads in the air, to the great emolument of the *hirudines*, which fare luxuriously. Those that escape the swallows, return no more to their nests, but, looking out for fresh settlements, lay a foundation for future colonies. All the females at this time are pregnant; the males that escape being eaten, wander away and die.

October 2.—Flying ants, male and female, usually swarm and migrate on hot sunny days in August and September; but this day a vast emigration took place in my garden, and myriads came forth, in appearance, from the drain which goes under the fruit wall; filling the air and the adjoining trees and shrubs with their numbers. The females were full of eggs. This late swarming is probably owing to the backward wet season. The day following, not one flying ant was to be seen.

Horse ants travel home to their nests laden with flies, which they have caught, and the *aureliæ* of smaller ants, which they seize by violence. WHITE.

In my *Naturalist's Calendar* for the year 1777, on

* Mr. White in his unpublished MSS., states that "a colony of black ants comes forth every Midsummer from under my staircase, which stands in the middle of my house; and as soon as the males and females (which fill all the windows and rooms) are flown away, the workers retire under the stairs, and are seen no more. It does not appear how this nest can have any communication with the garden and yard; and if not, how can these ants subsist in perpetual darkness and confinement?"—ED.

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September 6th, I find the following note to the article, Flying Ants:—

I saw a prodigious swarm of these ants flying about the top of some tall elm trees close by my house: some were continually dropping to the ground as if from the trees, and others rising up from the ground: many of them were joined together in copulation: and I imagine their life is but short; for as soon as produced from the egg by the heat of the sun, they propagate their species, and soon after perish. They were black, somewhat like the small black ant, and had four wings. I saw, also, at another place, a large sort, which were yellowish. On the 8th of September, 1785, I again observed the same circumstance of a vast number of these insects flying near the tops of the elms, and dropping to the ground.

On the 2nd of March, 1777, I saw great numbers of ants come out of the ground. MARKWICK.

GLOW-WORMS.—By observing two glow-worms, which were brought from the field to the bank in the garden, it appeared to us that these little creatures put out their lamps between eleven and twelve, and shine no more for the rest of the night.

Male glow-worms, attracted by the light of the candles, come into the parlour. WHITE.

EARTH-WORMS.—Earth-worms make their casts most in mild weather, about March and April; they do not lie torpid in winter, but come forth when there is no frost; they travel about in rainy nights, as appears from their sinuous tracks on the soft muddy soil, perhaps in search of food.

When earth-worms lie out a-nights on the turf, though they extend their bodies a great way, they do not quite leave their holes, but keep the ends of their tails fixed therein, so that, on the least alarm, they can retire with precipitation under the earth.* Whatever food falls within their reach

* I have observed the same fact with respect to eels in Windermere lake, Westmoreland. On a perfectly calm day, while in a boat, I have seen eels, with the ends of their tails remaining in their holes, slide back into them, like earth-worms, on being disturbed.—ED.

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THE GARDEN SNAIL. (*Helix aspersa.*)

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when thus extended, they seem to be content with,—such as blades of grass, straws, fallen leaves, the ends of which they often draw into their holes; even in copulation, their hinder parts never quit their holes: so that no two, except they lie within reach of each other's bodies, can have any commerce of that kind; but, as every individual is an hermaphrodite, there is no difficulty in meeting with a mate as would be the case were they of different sexes. WHITE.

SNAILS AND SLUGS.—The shell-less snails called slugs are in motion all the winter, in mild weather, and commit great depredations on garden plants, and much injure the green wheat, the loss of which is imputed to earth-worms; while the shelled snail, the *φερεοικος*, does not come forth at all till about April 10th, and not only lays itself up pretty early in autumn, in places secure from frost, but also throws out round the mouth of its shell a thick *operculum* formed from its own saliva; so that it is perfectly secured, and corked up, as it were, from all inclemencies. The cause why the slugs are able to endure the cold so much better than shell-snails is, that their bodies are covered with slime, as whales are with blubber.*

Snails copulate about midsummer; and soon after deposit their eggs in the mould, by running their heads and bodies under ground. Hence, the way to be rid of them is, to kill as many as possible before they begin to breed.

Large, gray, shell-less cellar snails lay themselves up about the same time with those that live abroad; hence, it is plain that a defect of warmth is not the only cause that influences their retreat. WHITE.

### SNAKE'S SLOUGH.

—— There the snake throws her enamell'd skin.
SHAKSPEARE, *Mids. Night's Dream.*

About the middle of this month (September) we found, in a field near a hedge, the slough of a large snake, which seemed to have been newly cast. From circumstances, it appeared as if turned wrong side outward, and as drawn off

* The slug is covered with a much thicker slime than the shelled snail.—ED.

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backward, like a stocking, or woman's glove.* Not only the whole skin, but scales from the very eyes, are peeled off, and appear in the head of the slough like a pair of spectacles. The reptile, at the time of changing his coat, had entangled himself intricately in the grass and weeds, so that the friction of the stalks and blades might promote this curious shifting of his *exuviæ*—

"Lubrica serpens
Exuit in spinis vestem."—LUCRET.

Smooth serpents that in thickets leave their skin.

It would be a most entertaining sight, could a person be an eyewitness to such a feat, and see the snake in the act of changing his garment. As the convexity of the scales of the eyes in the slough is now inward, that circumstance alone is a proof that the skin has been turned: not to mention that now the present inside is much darker than the outer. If you look through the scales of the snake's eyes from the concave side, viz. as the reptile used them, they lessen objects much. Thus it appears, from what has been said, that snakes crawl out of the mouth of their own sloughs, and quit the tail part last, just as eels are skinned by a cook-maid. While the scales of the eyes are growing loose, and a new skin is forming, the creature, in appearance, must be blind, and feel itself in an awkward, uneasy situation. WHITE.

I have seen many sloughs, or skins of snakes, entire, after they have cast them off; and once, in particular, I remember to have found one of these sloughs so intricately interwoven amongst some brakes, that it was with difficulty removed without being broken: this undoubtedly was done by the creature to assist in getting rid of its encumbrance.

I have great reason to suppose that the eft, or common lizard, also casts its skin, or slough, but not entire like the snake; for, on the 30th of March, 1777, I saw one with something ragged hanging to it, which appeared to be part of its old skin. MARKWICK.

* "The snake, renew'd in all his speckled pride
Of pompous youth, has cast his slough aside;
And in his summer livery rolls along,
Erect, and brandishing his forked tongue." DRYDEN.—ED.

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# OBSERVATIONS ON VEGETABLES.

## TREES, ORDER OF LOSING THEIR LEAVES.

One of the first trees that become naked is the walnut; the mulberry, the ash, especially if it bears many keys, and the horse-chestnut come next. All lopped trees, while their heads are young, carry their leaves a long while. Apple-trees and peaches remain green very late, often till the end of November: young beeches never cast their leaves till spring, till the new leaves sprout and push them off: in the autumn, the beechen leaves turn of a deep chestnut colour. Tall beeches cast their leaves about the end of October.

White.

Size and Growth.—Mr. Marsham, of Stratton, near Norwich, informs me by letter thus: "I became a planter early; so that an oak, which I planted in 1720, is become now, at one foot from the earth, 12 feet 6 inches in circumference, and at 14 feet (the half of the timber length), is 8 feet 2 inches. So, if the bark were to be measured as timber, the tree gives 116½ feet, buyer's measure. Perhaps you never heard of a larger oak, while the planter was living. I flatter myself that I increased the growth by washing the stem, and digging a circle as far as I supposed the roots to extend, and by spreading sawdust, &c., as related in the *Phil. Trans.* I wish I had begun with beeches (my favourite trees, as well as yours); I might then have seen very large trees of my own raising. But I did not begin with beech till 1741, and then by seed; so that my largest is now 5 feet from the ground, 6 feet 3 inches in girth, and, with its head, spreads a circle of 20 yards diameter. This tree was also dug round, washed, &c. *Stratton, 24th July*, 1790."

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The circumference of trees planted by myself, at one foot from the ground (1790) :—

| | | Feet. | Inches. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Oak in | 1730 | 4 | 5 |
| Ash | 1730 | 4 | 6¼ |
| Great fir | 1751 | 5 | 0 |
| Greatest beech | 1751 | 4 | 0 |
| Elm | 1750 | 5 | 3 |
| Lime | 1756 | 5 | 5 |

The great oak in the Holt, which is deemed by Mr. Marsham to be the biggest in this island, at 7 feet from the ground, measures, in circumference, 34 feet. It has, in old times, lost several of its boughs, and is tending to decay. Mr. Marsham computes that, at 14 feet length, this oak contains 1000 feet of timber.

It has been the received opinion that trees grow in height only by their annual upper shoot. But my neighbour over the way, whose occupation confines him to one spot, assures me that trees are expanded and raised in the lower parts also. The reason that he gives is this: the point of one of my firs began, for the first time, to peer over an opposite roof at the beginning of summer; but, before the growing season was over, the whole shoot of the year, and three or four joints of the body beside, became visible to him as he sits on his form in his shop. According to this supposition, a tree may advance in height considerably, though the summer shoot should be destroyed every year. WHITE.

FLOWING OF SAP.—If the bough of a vine is cut late in the spring, just before the shoots push out, it will bleed considerably; but, after the leaf is out, any part may be taken off without the least inconvenience. So oaks may be barked while the leaf is budding; but, as soon as they are expanded, the bark will no longer part from the wood, because the sap that lubricates the bark, and makes it part, is evaporated off through the leaves. WHITE.

RENOVATION OF LEAVES.—When oaks are quite stripped of their leaves by chaffers, they are clothed again soon after midsummer with a beautiful foliage; but beeches, horse-

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chestnuts, and maples, once defaced by those insects, never recover their beauty again for the whole season.*

WHITE.

ASH TREES.—Many ash trees bear loads of keys every year; others never seem to bear any at all. The prolific ones are naked of leaves, and unsightly; those that are sterile abound in foliage, and carry their verdure a long while, and are pleasing objects. WHITE.

BEECH.—Beeches love to grow in crowded situations, and will insinuate themselves through the thickest covert, so as to surmount it all: they are therefore proper to mend thin places in tall hedges. WHITE.

SYCAMORE.—May 12.—The sycamore, or great maple, is in bloom, and at this season makes a beautiful appearance, and affords much pabulum for bees, smelling strongly like honey. The foliage of this tree is very fine, and very ornamental to outlets. All the maples have saccharine juices.

WHITE.

GALLS OF LOMBARDY POPLAR.†—The stalks and ribs of the leaves of the Lombardy poplar are embossed with large tumours of an oblong shape, which, by incurious observers, have been taken for the fruit of the tree. These galls are full of small insects, some of which are winged, and some not. The parent insect is of the genus of *cynips*. Some poplars in the garden are quite loaded with these excrescences.

WHITE.

CHESTNUT TIMBER.—John Carpenter brings home some

* . . . "See, the fading, many-coloured woods,
Shade, deepening over shade, the country round
Imbrown." THOMSON.—ED.

† "The pale, descending year, yet pleasing still,
A gentler mood inspires; for now the leaf
Incessant rustles from the mournful grove,
Oft startling such as studious walk below,
And slowly circles through the waving air."
THOMSON'S AUTUMN.—ED.

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old chestnut trees, which are very long; in several places the woodpeckers had begun to bore them. The timber and bark of these trees are so very like oak, as might easily deceive an indifferent observer; but the wood is very shakey, and, towards the heart *cup-shakey* (that is to say, apt to separate in round pieces like cups), so that the inward parts are of no use. They are bought for the purpose of cooperage, but must make but ordinary barrels, buckets, &c. Chestnut sells for half the price of oak; but has sometimes been sent into the king's dock, and passed off instead of oak.

WHITE.

LIME BLOSSOMS.—Dr. Chandler tells, that in the south of France an infusion of the blossoms of the lime-tree (*tilia*) is in much esteem as a remedy for coughs, hoarsenesses, fevers, &c.; and that at Nismes, he saw an avenue of limes that was quite ravaged and torn in pieces by people greedily gathering the bloom, which they dried and kept for these purposes.

Upon the strength of the information, we made some tea of lime blossoms; and found it a very soft, well-flavoured, pleasant, saccharine julep, in taste much resembling the juice of liquorice. WHITE.

BLACKTHORN.—This tree usually blossoms while cold N.E. winds blow; so that the harsh rugged weather obtaining at this season, is called by the country people blackthorn winter.* WHITE.

IVY BERRIES.—Ivy berries afford a noble and providential supply for birds in winter and spring; for the first severe frost freezes and spoils all the haws, sometimes by the middle of November. Ivy berries do not seem to freeze.

WHITE.

* "Fled is the blasted verdure of the fields,
And, shrunk into their beds, the flowery race
Their sunny robes resign. E'en what remain'd
Of stronger fruits, falls from the naked tree;
And woods, fields, gardens, orchards, all around
The desolated prospect thrills the soul." THOMSON.—ED.

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HOPS.—The culture of Virgil's vines corresponded very exactly with the modern management of hops. I might instance in the perpetual diggings and hoeings, in the tying to the stakes and poles, in pruning the superfluous shoots, &c.; but lately I have observed a new circumstance, which was, a neighbouring farmer's harrowing between the rows of hops with a small triangular harrow, drawn by one horse, and guided by two handles. This occurrence brought to my mind the following passage:—

——— "ipsa
Flectere luctantes inter vineta juvencos."
*Georgic* II.

The struggling steers between the vine-rows bend.

Hops are dicœcious plants: hence, perhaps, it might be proper, though not practised, to leave purposely some male plants in every garden, that their farina might impregnate the blossoms. The female plants, without their male attendants, are not in their natural state: hence we may suppose the frequent failure of crop so incident to hop-grounds. No other growth, cultivated by man, has such frequent and general failures as hops.

Two hop-gardens much injured by a hail-storm, June 5, show now (September 2) a prodigious crop, and larger and fairer hops than any in the parish. The owners seem now to be convinced that the hail by beating off the tops of the binds has increased the side-shoots, and improved the crop. Query. Therefore, should not the tops of hops be pinched off when the binds are very gross and strong? WHITE.

SEED LYING DORMANT.—The naked part of the Hanger is now covered with thistles of various kinds. The seeds of these thistles may have lain probably under the thick shade of the beeches for many years, but could not vegetate till the sun and air were admitted. When old beech-trees are cleared away, the naked ground, in a year or two, becomes covered with strawberry plants, the seeds of which must have lain in the ground for an age at least. One of the *slidders*, or trenches, down the middle of the Hanger, close covered over with lofty beeches near a century old, is still called *strawberry-slidder*, though no strawberries have grown



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there in the memory of man. That sort of fruit did once, no doubt abound there, and will again, when the obstruction is removed.* WHITE.

BEANS SOWN BY BIRDS.—Many horse-beans sprang up in my field-walks in the autumn, and are now grown to a considerable height. As the Ewel was in beans last summer, it is most likely that these seeds came from thence; but then the distance is too considerable for them to have been conveyed by mice. It is most probable, therefore, that they were brought by birds, and, in particular, by jays and pies, who seem to have hid them among the grass and moss, and then to have forgotten where they had stowed them. Some peas are growing also in the same situation, and probably under the same circumstances. WHITE.

CUCUMBERS SET BY BEES.—If bees, who are much the best setters of cucumbers, do not happen to take kindly to the frames, the best way is to tempt them by a little honey, put on the meal and female bloom. When they are once induced to haunt the frames, they set all the fruit, and will hover with impatience round the lights in a morning, till the glasses are opened. Proved by experience. WHITE.

WHEAT.—A notion has always obtained, that, in England, hot summers are productive of fine crops of wheat; yet in the years 1780 and 1781, though the heat was intense, the wheat was much mildewed, and the crop light. Does not severe heat, while the straw is milky, occasion its juices to exude, which being extravasated, occasion spots, discolour the stems and blades, and injure the health of the plants? WHITE.

TRUFFLES.—August.—A truffle-hunter called on us,

* In breaking up old turf in making plantations in the royal parks, and which probably had not been disturbed for centuries, I have had several opportunities of observing the vegetation of plants which had not previously been observed in the neighbourhood. For instance, in Bushy Park, heart's-ease, and the tree mignonette (*reseda lutcola*) appeared in abundance. I also saw the blue columbine in a plantation in Devonshire.—ED.

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having in his pocket several large truffles found in this neighbourhood.* He says, these roots are not to be found in deep woods, but in narrow hedge-rows and the skirts of coppices. Some truffles, he informed us, lie two feet within the earth, and some quite on the surface; the latter, he added, have little or no smell, and are not so easily discovered by the dogs as those that lie deeper. Half-a-crown a pound was the price which he asked for this commodity.

Truffles never abound in wet winters and springs.† They are in season, in different situations, at least nine months in the year. WHITE.

TREMELLA NOSTOC.—Though the weather may have been ever so dry and burning, yet, after two or three wet days, this jelly-like substance abounds on the walks. WHITE.

FAIRY RINGS.‡—The cause, occasion, call it what you will, of *fairy rings*, subsists in the turf, and is conveyable with it; for the turf of my garden-walks, brought from the down above, abounds with those appearances, which vary their shape, and shift situation continually, discovering themselves now in circles, now in segments, and sometimes in irregular patches and spots. Wherever they obtain, puff-balls abound; the seeds of which were doubtless brought in the turf.

WHITE.

* Mr. Herbert says that many years ago an immense stock of very small truffles crowded together under a young cedar-tree upon the lawn near Lord Carnarvon's charming seat at Highclere. The experiment of transplanting several of these and setting them under beech-trees, was tried successfully. They increased in size, and became much finer than those which were left.—ED.

† In those years when there is a failure of mushrooms, there is generally a failure of truffles, so that some secret cause influences alike these analogous productions of nature.—ED.

‡ The fungi tribe, from their circular shape, shed their seed in a circle around them. This in time produces regular circles or segments. The freshness of the grass is probably produced by the moisture derived from the fungi. A man on the Brighton downs who was employed in digging for flints, assured me that when he worked under a fairy ring he never could perceive any difference in the sub-soil.—ED.



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## METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS.

BAROMETER.—November 22, 1768.—A remarkable fall of the barometer all over the kingdom. At Selborne, we had no wind, and not much rain; only vast, swagging, rock-like clouds appeared at a distance. WHITE.

PARTIAL FROST.—The country people, who are abroad in winter mornings long before sun-rise, talk much of hard frost in some spots, and none in others. The reason of these partial frosts is obvious, for there are at such times partial fogs about: where the fog obtains, little or no frost appears; but where the air is clear, there it freezes hard. So the frost takes place either on hill or in dale, wherever the air happens to be clearest and freest from vapour. WHITE.

THAW.—Thaws are sometimes surprisingly quick, considering the small quantity of rain. Does not the warmth at such times come from below? The cold in still, severe seasons, seems to come down from above: for the coming over of a cloud in severe nights raises the thermometer abroad at once full ten degrees. The first notices of thaws often seem to appear in vaults, cellars, &c.

If a frost happens, even when the ground is considerably dry, as soon as a thaw takes place the paths and fields are all in a batter. Country people say that the frost draws moisture. But the true philosophy is, that the steam and vapours continually ascending from the earth, are bound in by the frost, and not suffered to escape, till released by the thaw. No wonder, then, that the surface is all in a float; since the quantity of moisture by evaporation that arises daily from every acre of ground is astonishing. WHITE.

FROZEN SLEET.—January 20.—Mr. H.'s man says, that he caught this day, in a lane near Hackwood-park, many rooks, which, attempting to fly, fell from the trees with their

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wings frozen together by the sleet that froze as it fell. There were, he affirms, many dozen so disabled. WHITE.

MIST, CALLED LONDON SMOKE.—This is a blue mist, which has somewhat the smell of coal-smoke, and as it always comes to us with a north-east wind, is supposed to come from London. It has a strong smell, and is supposed to occasion blights. When such mists appear, they are usually followed by dry weather. WHITE.

REFLECTION ON FOG.*—When people walk in deep white fog by night with a lantern, if they will turn their backs to the light, they will see their shades impressed on the fog in rude gigantic proportions. This phenomenon seems not to have been attended to, but implies the great density of the meteor at that juncture. WHITE.

HONEY DEW.†—June 4, 1783.—Vast honey dews this week. The reason of these seems to be, that in hot days the effluvia of flowers are drawn up by brisk evaporation, and then in the night fall down with the dews, with which they are entangled.‡

This clammy substance is very grateful to bees, who gather it with great assiduity; but it is injurious to the trees on which it happens to fall, by stopping the pores of the leaves. The greatest quantity falls in still, close weather; because winds disperse it, and copious dews dilute it, and prevent its ill effects. It falls mostly in hazy, warm weather. WHITE.

* The country people look with a kind of superstitious awe at the red lowering aspect of the sun through a fog. "Cum caput obscurâ nitidum ferrugine texit."—MR. WHITE'S MSS.—ED.

† Honey-dew is the exuviæ of insects. They are little green aphides and harbour under the leaves of trees, from whence their *dew* is dropped on the leaves below. This is collected by bees and ants; the latter are very careful not to injure the insect, as I have frequently observed. It seems extraordinary that so observant a naturalist as Mr. White should have been ignorant of this circumstance. He mentions in one of his MSS. that one of his trees was covered with aphides and viscous honey-dews.—ED.

‡ It will hardly be deemed a discredit to an observer so patient, so accurate, and so faithful, as Mr. White, to mention, that his conjecture concerning the origin of honey-dew is erroneous; the subject has been elucidated by the observations of Mr. William Curtis, who has discovered it to be the "excrement of the aphides." See *Transact. of the Linnæan Society*, vol. vi. No. 4.—MITFORD.

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MORNING CLOUDS.—After a bright night and vast dews, the sky usually becomes cloudy by eleven or twelve o'clock in the forenoon, and clear again towards the decline of the day. The reason seems to be, that the dew drawn up by evaporation occasions the clouds; which, towards evening, being no longer rendered buoyant by the warmth of the sun, melt away, and fall down again in dews. If clouds are watched in a still, warm evening, they will be seen to melt away and disappear. WHITE.

DRIPPING WEATHER AFTER DROUGHT.—No one that has not attended to such matters, and taken down remarks, can be aware how much ten days dripping weather will influence the growth of grass or corn after a severe dry season. This present summer, 1776, yielded a remarkable instance; for, till the 30th of May, the fields were burnt up and naked, and the barley not half out of the ground; but now, June 10, there is an agreeable prospect of plenty. WHITE.

AURORA BOREALIS.—November 1, 1787.—The north aurora made a particular appearance, forming itself into a broad, red, fiery belt, which extended from east to west across the welkin: but the moon rising at about ten o'clock, in unclouded majesty, in the east, put an end to this grand, but awful, meteorous phenomenon. WHITE.

BLACK SPRING, 1771.—Dr. Johnson says, that "in 1771 the season was so severe in the Island of Skye, that it is remembered by the name of the *black spring*. The snow, which seldom lies at all, covered the ground for eight weeks; many cattle died, and those that survived were so emaciated, that they did not require the male at the usual season." The case was just the same with us here in the south; never were so many barren cows known as in the spring following that dreadful period. Whole dairies missed being in calf together.

At the end of March, the face of the earth was naked to a surprising degree: wheat hardly to be seen, and no signs of any grass; turnips all gone, and sheep in a starving way; all provisions rising in price. Farmers cannot sow for want of rain. WHITE.

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# SUMMARY OF THE WEATHER.

MEASURE OF RAIN IN INCHES AND HUNDREDS

| Year. | Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | April. | May. | June. | July. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Total. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1782 | 4.64 | 1.98 | 6.54 | 4.57 | 6.34 | 1.75 | 7.09 | 3.28 | 3.72 | 1.93 | 2.51 | 0.91 | 50.26 |
| 1783 | 4.43 | 5.54 | 2.16 | 0.88 | 2.84 | 2.82 | 1.45 | 2.24 | 5.52 | 1.71 | 3.01 | 1.10 | 33.71 |
| 1784 | 3.18 | 0.77 | 3.82 | 3.92 | 1.52 | 3.65 | 2.40 | 3.88 | 2.51 | 0.89 | 4.70 | 3.06 | 33.30 |
| 1785 | 2.84 | 1.80 | 0.30 | 0.17 | 0.60 | 1.39 | 3.80 | 3.21 | 5.94 | 5.21 | 2.27 | 4.20 | 31.55 |
| 1786 | 6.91 | 1.42 | 1.62 | 1.81 | 2.40 | 1.20 | 1.99 | 4.34 | 4.79 | 5.40 | 4.38 | — | — |
| 1787 | 0.88 | 3.67 | 4.28 | 0.74 | 2.60 | 1.50 | 6.53 | 0.83 | 1.56 | 5.40 | 4.9 | 5.60 | 36.24 |
| 1788 | 1.60 | 3.37 | 1.31 | 0.61 | 0.76 | 1.27 | 3.58 | 3.22 | 5.71 | — | 0.86 | 0.23 | 22.50 |
| 1789 | 4.48 | 4.11 | 2.47 | 1.81 | 4.50 | 4.24 | 3.69 | 0.99 | 2.82 | 5.40 | 3.67 | 4.62 | 42.00 |
| 1790 | 1.99 | 0.49 | 0.45 | 3.64 | 4.38 | 0.13 | 3.24 | 2.30 | 0.66 | 2.10 | 6.95 | 5.94 | 32.27 |
| 1791 | 6.73 | 4.64 | 1.59 | 1.13 | 1.33 | 0.91 | 5.66 | 1.73 | 1.73 | 6.49 | 8.16 | 4.93 | 44.93 |
| 1792 | 6.70 | 1.68 | 6.70 | 4.08 | 3.00 | 2.78 | 5.16 | 4.25 | 5.53 | 5.55 | 1.65 | 2.11 | 48.56 |
| 1793 | 3.71 | 2.32 | 3.33 | 3.19 | 1.21 | | | | | | | | |

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## SUMMARY OF THE WEATHER.

1768. Begins with a fortnight's frost and snow; rainy during February. Cold and wet spring; wet season from the beginning of June to the end of harvest. Latter end of September foggy, without rain. All October and the first part of November rainy; and thence to the end of the year alternate rains and frosts.

1769. January and February, frosty and rainy, with gleams of fine weather in the intervals. To the middle of March, wind and rain. To the end of March dry and windy. To the middle of April stormy, with rain. To the end of June, fine weather, with rain. To the beginning of August, warm, dry weather. To the end of September, rainy, with short intervals of fine weather. To the latter end of October, frosty mornings, with fine days. The next fortnight rainy; thence to the end of November, dry and frosty. December, windy, with rain and intervals of frost, and the first fortnight very foggy.

1770. Frost for the first fortnight; during the 14th and 15th, all the snow melted. To the end of February, mild, hazy weather. The whole of March, frosty, with bright weather. April cloudy, with rain and snow. May began with summer showers, and ended with dark cold rains. June rainy, chequered with gleams of sunshine. The first fortnight in July, dark and sultry; the latter part of the month, heavy rain. August, September, and the first fortnight in October, in general fine weather, though with frequent interruptions of rain; from the middle of October to the end of the year, almost incessant rains.

1771. Severe frosts till the last week in January. To the first week in February, rain and snow; to the end of February, spring weather. To the end of the third week in April, frosty weather. To the end of the first fortnight in May, spring weather with copious showers. To the end of

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June, dry, warm weather. The first fortnight in July, warm, rainy weather. To the end of September, warm weather, but in general cloudy, with showers. October rainy. November frost, with intervals of fog and rain. December, in general, bright, mild weather, with hoar frosts.

1772. To the end of the first week in February, frost and snow. To the end of the first fortnight in March, frost, sleet, rain, and snow. To the middle of April, cold rains. To the middle of May, dry weather, with cold piercing winds. To the end of the first week in June, cool showers. To the middle of August, hot, dry, summer weather. To the end of September, rain, with storms and thunder. To December 22, rain, with mild weather. December 23, the first ice. To the end of the month, cold, foggy weather.

1773. The first week in January, frost; thence to the end of the month, dark, rainy weather. The first fortnight in February, hard frost. To the end of the first week in March, misty showery weather. Bright spring days to the close of the month. Frequent showers to the latter end of April. To the end of June, warm showers, with intervals of sunshine. To the end of August, dry weather, with a few days of rain. To the end of the first fortnight in November, rainy. The next four weeks, frost; and thence to the end of the year, rainy.

1774. Frost and rain to the end of the first fortnight in March; thence to the end of the month, dry weather. To the 15th of April, showers; thence to the end of April, fine spring days. During May, showers and sunshine in about an equal proportion. Dark, rainy weather to the end of the third week in July; thence to the 24th of August, sultry, with thunder and occasional showers. To the end of the third week in November, rain, with frequent intervals of sunny weather. To the end of December, dark, dripping fogs.

1775. To the end of the first fortnight in March, rain almost every day. To the first week in April, cold winds, with showers of rain and snow. To the end of June, warm, bright weather, with frequent showers. The first fortnight in July almost incessant rains. To the 26th of August, sultry weather, with frequent showers. To the end of the third week in September, rain, with a few intervals of fine

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weather. To the end of the year, rain, with intervals of hoar-frost and sunshine.

1776. To January 24, dark, frosty weather, with much snow. March 24, to the end of the month, foggy, with hoar-frost. To the 30th of May, dark, dry, harsh weather, with cold winds. To the end of the first fortnight in July, warm, with much rain. To the end of the first week in August, hot and dry, with intervals of thunder showers. To the end of October, in general fine seasonable weather, with a considerable proportion of rain. To the end of the year, dry, frosty weather, with some days of hard rain.

1777. To the 10th of January, hard frost. To the 20th of January, foggy, with frequent showers. To the 18th of February, hard, dry frost, with snow. To the end of May, heavy showers, with intervals of warm dry spring days. To the 8th of July, dark, with heavy rain. To the 18th of July, dry, warm weather. To the end of July, very heavy rains. To the 12th of October, remarkably fine, warm weather. To the end of the year, gray mild weather, with but little rain, and still less frost.

1778. To the 13th of January, frost with a little snow; to the 24th of January, rain; to the 30th, hard frost. To the 23rd February, dark, harsh, foggy weather, with rain. To the end of the month, hard frost with snow. To the end of the first fortnight in March, dark, harsh weather. From the 1st to the end of the first fortnight in April, spring weather. To the end of the month, snow and ice. To the 11th of June, cool, with heavy showers. To the 19th of July, hot, sultry, parching weather. To the end of the month, heavy showers. To the end of September, dry, warm weather. To the end of the year, wet, with considerable intervals of sunshine.

1779. Frost and showers to the end of January. To the 21st of April, warm, dry weather. To 8th of May, rainy. To the 7th June, dry and warm. To the 6th July, hot weather, with frequent rain. To the 18th July, dry, hot weather. To August 8th, hot weather, with frequent rains. To the end of August, fine dry harvest weather. To the end of November, fine autumnal weather, with intervals of rain. To the end of the year, rain with frost and snow.

1780. To the end of January, frost. To the end of

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February, dark, harsh weather, with frequent intervals of frost. To the end of March, warm, showery, spring weather. To the end of April, dark, harsh weather, with rain and frost. To the end of the first fortnight in May, mild, with rain. To the end of August, rain and fair weather in pretty equal proportions. To the end of October, fine autumnal weather, with intervals of rain. To the 24th of November, frost. To December 16, mild, dry, foggy weather. To the end of the year, frost and snow.

1781. To January 25, frost and snow. To the end of February, harsh and windy, with rain and snow. To April 5, cold, drying winds. To the end of May, mild spring weather, with a few light showers. June began with heavy rain, but thence to the end of October, dry weather, with a few flying showers. To the end of the year, open weather, with frequent rains.

1782. To February 4, open, mild weather. To February 22, hard frost. To the end of March, cold, blowing weather, with frost, and snow, and rain. To May 7, cold, dark rains. To the end of May, mild, with incessant rains. To the end of June, warm and dry. To the end of August, warm, with almost perpetual rains. The first fortnight in September, mild and dry: thence to the end of the month, rain. To the end of October, mild, with frequent showers. November began with hard frost, and continued throughout, with alternate frost and thaw. The first part of December frosty; the latter part mild.

1783. To January 16, rainy, with heavy winds. To the 24th, hard frost. To the end of the first fortnight in February, blowing, with much rain. To the end of February, stormy, dripping weather. To the 9th of May, cold, harsh winds (thick ice on 5th of May). To the end of August, hot weather, with frequent showers. To the 23rd September, mild, with heavy driving rains. To November 12th, dry, mild weather. To the 18th December, gray, soft weather, with a few showers. To the end of the year, hard frost.

1784. To February 19, hard frost, with two thaws; one the 14th January, the other 5th February. To February 28, mild, wet fogs. To the 3rd March, frost, with ice. To March 10, sleet and snow. To April 2, snow and hard frost. To April 27, mild weather, with much rain. To May 12

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cold, drying winds. To May 20, hot, cloudless weather. To June 27, warm, with frequent showers. To July 18, hot, and dry. To the end of August, warm, with heavy rains. To November 6, clear, mild, autumnal weather, except a few days of rain at the latter end of September. To the end of the year, fog, rain, and hard frost (on December 10, the therm. 1 degree below 0).

1785. A thaw began on the 2nd of January, and rainy weather, with wind, continued to January 28. To 15th March, very hard frost. To 21st March, mild, with sprinkling showers. To April 7, hard frost. To May 17, mild, windy weather, without a drop of rain. To the end of May, cold, with a few showers. To June 9, mild weather, with frequent soft showers. To July 13, hot, dry weather, with a few showery intervals. To July 22, heavy rain. To the end of September, warm, with frequent showers. To the end of October, frequent rain. To 18th of November, dry, mild weather. (Hay-making finished November 9, and the wheat harvest November 14.) To December 23, rain. To the end of the year, hard frost.

1786. To the 7th January, frost and snow. To January 13, mild, with much rain. To the 21st January, deep snow. To February 11, mild, with frequent rains. 21st February, dry, with high winds. To 10th March, hard frost. To 13th April, wet, with intervals of frost. To the end of April, dry, mild weather. On the 1st and 2nd May, thick ice. To 10th May, heavy rain. To June 14, fine, warm, dry weather. From the 8th to the 11th July, heavy showers. To October 13, warm, with frequent showers. To October 19, ice. To October 24, mild, pleasant weather. To November 3, frost. To December 16, rain, with a few detached days of frost. To the end of the year, frost and snow.

1787. To January 24, dark, moist, mild weather. To January 28, frost and snow. To February 16, mild, showery weather. To February 28, dry, cool weather. To March 10, stormy, with driving rain. To March 24, bright, frosty weather. To the end of April, mild, with frequent rain. To May 22, fine, bright weather. To the end of June, mostly warm, with frequent showers (on June 7, ice as thick as a crown piece). To the end of July, hot and sultry, with copious rain. To the end of September, hot, dry weather,

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with occasional showers. To November 23, mild, with light frosts and rain. To the end of November, hard frost. To December 21, still and mild, with rain. To the end of the year, frost.

1788. To January 13, mild and wet. To January 18, frost. To the end of the month, dry, windy weather. To the end of February, frosty, with frequent showers. To March 14, hard frost. To the end of March, dark, harsh weather, with frequent showers. To April 4, windy, with showers. To the end of May, bright, dry, warm weather, with a few occasional showers. From June 28 to July 17, heavy rains. To August 12, hot dry weather. To the end of September, alternate showers and sunshine. To November 22, dry, cool weather. To the end of the year, hard frost.

1789. To January 13, hard frost. To the end of the month, mild, with showers. To the end of February, frequent rain, with snow showers, and heavy gales of wind. To 13th March, hard frost, with snow. To April 18, heavy rain, with frost, and snow, and sleet. To the end of April, dark, cold weather, with frequent rains. To June 9, warm spring weather, with brisk winds, and frequent showers. From June 4, to the end of July, warm, with much rain. To August 29, hot, dry, sultry weather. To September 11, mild, with frequent showers. To the end of September, fine autumnal weather, with occasional showers. To November 17, heavy rain, with violent gales of wind. To December 18, mild, dry weather, with a few showers. To the end of the year, rain and wind.

1790. To January 16, mild, foggy weather, with occasional rains. To January 21, frost. To January 28, dark, with driving rains. To February 14, mild, dry weather. To February 22, hard frost. To April 5, bright, cold weather, with a few showers. To April 15, dark and harsh, with a deep snow. To April 21, cold, cloudy weather, with ice. To June 6, mild, spring weather, with much rain. From July 3 to July 14, cool, with heavy rain. To the end of July, warm, dry weather. To August 6, cold, with wind and rain. To August 24, fine harvest weather. To September 5, strong gales, with driving showers. To November 26, mild autumnal weather, with frequent showers. To December 1, hard frost

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and snow. To the end of the year, rain and snow, and a few days of frost.

1791. To the end of January, mild, with heavy rains. To the end of February, windy, with much rain and snow. From March to the end of June, mostly dry, especially June. March and April, rather cold and frost. May and June, hot. July, rainy. Fine harvest weather, and pretty dry, to the end of September. Wet October, and cold towards the end. Very wet and stormy in November. Much frost in December.

1792. Some hard frost in January, but mostly wet and mild. February, some hard frost, and a little snow. March, wet and cold. April, great storms on the 18th, then some very warm weather. May and June, cold and dry. July, wet and cold; indifferent harvest, rather late and wet. September, windy and wet. October, showery and mild. November, dry and fine. December, mild.

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A

# COMPARATIVE VIEW

OF THE

# NATURALIST'S CALENDAR,

AS KEPT

AT SELBORNE, IN HAMPSHIRE, BY THE LATE REV. GILBERT WHITE, M.A.,

AND AT CATSFIELD, NEAR BATTLE, IN SUSSEX, BY WILLIAM MARKWICK, ESQ., F.L.S.,

FROM THE YEAR 1768, TO THE YEAR 1793.

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N.B.—The dates in the following Calendars, when more than one, express the *earliest* and *latest* times in which the circumstance noted was observed.

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# A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF WHITE'S AND MARKWICK'S CALENDARS.

Of the abbreviations used, fl. signifies *flowering*; l. *leafing*; and ap. the first *appearance*.

| | WHITE. | MARKWICK. |
|---|---|---|
| Redbreast (sylvia rubecula) sings | Jan. 1—12 | Jan. 3—31, and again Oct. 6. |
| Larks (alauda arvensis) congregate | Jan. 1—18 | Oct. 16, Feb. 9. |
| Nuthatch (sitta europæa) heard | Jan. 1—14 | March 3, April 10. |
| Winter aconite (helleborus hiemalis) fl. | Jan 1, Feb. 18 | Feb. 28, April 17. |
| Shell-less snail or slug (limax) ap. | Jan. 2 | Jan. 16, May 31. |
| Grey and White wagtail (motacilla boarula) ap. (motacilla alba) ap. | Jan. 2—11 | Jan. 24, March 26. Dec. 12, Feb. 23. |
| Missel thrush (turdus viscivorus) sings | Jan. 2—14 | Feb. 19, April 14. |
| Bearsfoot (helleborus fœtidus) fl. | Jan. 2, Feb. 14 | March 1, May 5. |
| Polyanthus (primula polyantha) fl. | Jan. 2, April 12 | Jan 1, April 9. |
| Double daisy (bellis perennis plena) fl. | Jan. 2, Feb. 1 | March 17, April 29. |
| Mezereon (daphne mezereum) fl. | Jan. 3, Feb. 16 | Jan. 2, April 4. |
| Pansy (viola tricolor) fl. | Jan. 3 | Jan. 1, May 10. |
| Red dead-nettle (lamium purpureum) fl. | Jan. 3—21 | Jan. 1, April 5. |
| Groundsel (senecio vulgaris) fl. | Jan. 3—15 | Jan. 1, April 9. |
| Hazel (corylus avellana) fl. | Jan. 3, Feb. 28 | Jan. 21, March 11. |
| Hepatica (anemone hepatica) fl. | Jan. 4, Feb. 18 | Jan. 17, April 9. |
| Hedge-sparrow (sylvia modularis) sings | Jan. 5—12 | Jan. 16, March 13. |
| Common flies (musca domestica) seen in numbers | Jan. 5, Feb. 3 | May 15. |

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| | WHITE. | MARKWICK. |
|---|---|---|
| Greater titmouse (parus major) sings | Jan. 6, Feb. 6 | Feb. 17, March 17. |
| Thrush (turdus musicus) sings | Jan. 6—22 | Jan. 15, April 4. |
| Insects swarm under sunny hedges | Jan. 6. | |
| Primrose (primula vulgaris) fl. | Jan. 6, April 7 | Jan 3, March 22. |
| Bees (apis mellifica) ap. | Jan. 6, March 19 | Jan. 31, April 11 ; last seen Dec. 30. |
| Gnats play about | Jan. 6, Feb. 3. | |
| Chaffinches, male and female (fringilla cœlebs) seen in equal numbers | Jan. 6—11 | Dec. 2, Feb. 3. |
| Furze or gorse (ulex europæus) fl. | Jan. 8, Feb. 1 | Jan. 1, March 27. |
| Wall-flower (cheiranthus cheiri ; seu fruticulosus of Smith) fl. | Jan. 8, April 1 | Feb. 21, May 9. |
| Stock (cheiranthus incanus) fl. | Jan. 8—12 | Feb. 1, June 3. |
| Emberiza alba (bunting) in great flocks | Jan. 9. | |
| Linnets (fringilla linota) congregate | Jan. 9 | Jan. 11. |
| Lambs begin to fall | Jan. 9—11 | Jan. 6, Feb. 21. |
| Rooks (corvus frugilegus) resort to their nest trees | Jan. 10, Feb. 11 | Jan. 23. |
| Black hellebore (helleborus niger) fl. | Jan. 10 | April 27. |
| Snow-drop (galanthus nivalis) fl. | Jan. 10, Feb. 5 | Jan. 18, March 1. |
| White dead-nettle (lamium album) fl. | Jan. 13 | March 23, May 10. |
| Trumpet honey-suckle, fl. | Jan. 13. | |
| Common creeping crow-foot (ranunculus repens) fl. | Jan. 13 | April 10, May 12. |
| House-sparrow (fringilla domestica) chirps | Jan. 14 | Feb. 17, May 9. |
| Dandelion (leontodon taraxacum) fl. | Jan. 16, March 11 | Feb. 1, April 17. |
| Bat (vespertilio) ap. | Jan. 16, March 24 | Feb. 6, June 1 ; last seen Nov. 20. |
| Spiders shoot their webs | Jan. 16. | |

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| | WHITE. | MARKWICK. |
|---|---|---|
| Butterfly, ap. | Jan. 16 | Feb. 21, May 8 ; last seen Dec. 22. |
| Brambling (fringilla montifringilla) ap. | Jan. 16 | Jan. 10—31. |
| Blackbird (turdus merula) whistles | Jan. 17 | Feb. 15, May 13. |
| Wren (sylvia troglodytes) sings | Jan. 17 | Feb. 7, June 12. |
| Earth-worms lie out | Jan. 18, Feb. 8. | |
| Crocus (crocus vernus) fl. | Jan. 13, March 18 | Jan 20, March 19. |
| Skylark (alauda arvensis) sings | Jan. 21 | Jan 12, Feb. 27 ; sings till Nov. 13. |
| Ivy casts its leaves | Jan. 22. | |
| Helleborus hiemalis, fl. | Jan. 22—24 | Feb. 28, April 17. |
| Common dor or clock (scarabæus stercorarius) | Jan. 23 | Feb. 12, April 12; last seen Nov. 24. |
| Peziza acetabulum, ap. | Jan. 23. | |
| Helleborus virid. fl. | Jan. 28, March 5. | |
| Hazel (corylus avellana) fl. | Jan. 23, Feb. 1 | Jan. 27, March 11. |
| Woodlark (alauda arborea) sings | Jan. 24, Feb. 21 | Jan. 28, June 5. |
| Chaffich (fringilla cœlebs) sings | Jan. 24, Feb. 15 | Jan. 21, Feb. 26. |
| Jack-daws begin to come to churches | Jan. 25, March 4. | |
| Yellow wagtail (motacilla flava) ap. | Jan. 25, April 14 | April, 13, July 3 ; last seen Sept. 8. |
| Honeysuckle (lonicera periclymenum) l. | Jan. 25 | Jan. 1, April 9. |
| Field or procumbent speedwell (veronica agrestis) fl. | Jan. 27, March 15 | Feb. 12, March 29. |
| Nettle butterfly (papilio urticæ) ap. | Jan. 27, April 2 | March 5, April 24 ; last seen June 6. |
| White wagtail (motacilla alba) chirps | Jan. 28 | March 16. |
| Shell-snail (helix nemoralis) ap. | Jan. 28, Feb. 24 | April 2, June 11. |
| Earthworms engender | Jan. 30. | |
| Barren Strawberry (fragaria sterilis) fl. | Feb. 1, March 26 | Jan. 13, March 26. |
| Blue titmouse (parus cæruleus) chirps | Feb. 1 | April 27. |



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| | WHITE. | MARKWICK. |
|---|---|---|
| Brown wood owls hoot | Feb. 2 | |
| Hen (phasianus gallus) sits | Feb. 3. | March 8, hatches. |
| Marsh titmouse begins his two harsh sharp notes | Feb. 3. | |
| Gossamer floats | Feb. 4, April 1. | |
| Musca tenax, ap. | Feb. 4, April 8. | |
| Laurustine (viburnum tinus) fl. | Feb. 5. | Jan 1, April 5. |
| Butcher's broom (ruscus aculeatus) fl. | Feb. 5 | Jan. 1, May 10. |
| Fox (canis vulpes) smells rank | Feb. 7. | May 19, young brought forth. |
| Turkey-cocks strut and gobble | Feb. 10 | |
| Yellow-hammer (emberiza citrinella) sings | Feb. 12 | Feb. 18, April 28. |
| Brimstone butterfly (papilio rhamni) ap. | Feb. 13, April 2 | Feb. 13, March 8 ; last seen Dec. 24. |
| Green woodpecker (picus viridis) makes a loud cry | Feb. 13, March 23 | Jan. 1, April 17. |
| Raven (corvus corax) builds | Feb. 14—17 | April 1, has young ones June 1. |
| Yew-tree (taxus baccata) fl. | Feb. 14, March 27 | Feb. 2, April 11. |
| Coltsfoot (tussilago farfara) fl. | Feb. 15, March 23 | Feb. 18, April 13. |
| Rooks (corvus frugilegus) build | Feb. 16, March 6 | Feb. 28, March 5. |
| Partridges (perdix cinerea) pair | Feb. 17 | Feb. 16, March 20. |
| Peas (pisum sativum) sown | Feb. 17, March 8 | Feb. 8, March 31. |
| House-pigeon (columba domestica) has young ones | Feb. 18 | Feb. 8. |
| Field-crickets open their holes | Feb. 20, March 30 | |
| Common flea (pulex irritans) ap. | Feb. 21—26 | |
| Pilewort (ficaria verna) fl. | Feb. 21, April 13 | Jan. 25, March 26. |
| Goldfinch (fringilla carduelis) sings | Feb. 21, April 5 | Feb. 28, May 5. |
| Viper (coluber berus) ap. | Feb. 22, March 26 | Feb. 23, May 6 ; last seen Oct. 28. |
| Wood-louse (oniscus asellus) ap. | Feb. 23, April 1 | April 27, June 17. |

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| Missel thrushes pair | Feb. 24. | |
| Daffodil (narcissus pseudonarcissus) fl. | Feb. 24, April 7 | Feb. 26, April 18. |
| Willow (salix alba) fl. | Feb. 24, April 2 | Feb. 27, April 11. |
| Frogs (rana temporaria) croak | Feb. 25 | March 9, April 20. |
| Sweet violet (viola odorata) fl. | Feb. 26, March 31 | Feb. 7, April 5. |
| Phalæna tinea vestianella, ap. | Feb. 26. | |
| Stone-curlew (otis œdicnemus) clamours | Feb. 27, April 24 | June 17. |
| Filbert (corylus sativus) fl. | Feb. 27 | Jan. 25, March 26. |
| Ring-dove coos | Feb. 27, April 5 | March 2, August 10. |
| Apricot-tree (prunus armeniaca) fl. | Feb. | Feb. 28, April 5. |
| Toad (rana bufo) ap. | Feb. 28, March 24 | March 15, July 1. |
| Frogs (rana temporaria) spawn | Feb. 28, March 22 | Feb. 9, April 10, tadpoles Mar. 19. |
| Ivy-leaved speedwell (veronica hederifolia) fl. | March 1, April 2 | Feb. 16, April 10. |
| Peach (amygdalus persica) fl. | March 2, April 17 | March 4, April 29. |
| Frog (rana temporaria) ap. | March 2, April 6 | March 9. |
| Shepherd's purse (thlaspi bursa pastoris) fl. | March 3 | Jan. 2, April 16. |
| Pheasant (phasianus colchicus) crows | March 3—29 | March 1, May 22. |
| Land-tortoise comes forth | March 4, May 8. | |
| Lungwort (pulmonaria officinalis) fl. | March 4, April 16 | March 2, May 19. |
| Podura fimetaria ap. | March 4. | |
| Aranea scenica saliens ap. | March 4. | |
| Scolopendra forficata ap. | March 5—16. | |
| Wryneck (jynx torquilla) ap. | March 5, April 25 | March 26, April 23; last seen Sept. 14. |
| Goose (anas anser) sits on its eggs | March 5 | March 21. |
| Duck (anas boschas) lays | March 5 | March 28. |

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| Dog's violet (viola canina) fl. | March 6, April 18 | Feb. 28, April 22. |
| Peacock butterfly (papilio io) ap. | March 6 | Feb. 13, April 20; last seen Dec. 25. |
| Trouts begin to rise | March 7—14. | |
| Field beans (vicia faba) planted | March 8 | April 29, emerge. |
| Blood-worms appear in the water | March 8. | |
| Crow (corvus corone) builds | March 10 | July 1, has young ones. |
| Oats (avena sativa) sown | March 10—18 | March 16, April 13. |
| Golden-crowned wren (sylvia regulus) sings | March 12, April 30 | April 15, May 22; seen Dec. 23, |
| Asp (populus tremula) fl. | March 12 | Feb. 26, Mar. 28. [Jan. 26. |
| Common elder (sambucus nigra) l. | March 13—20 | Jan. 24, April 22. |
| Laurel (prunus laurocerasus) fl. | March 15, May 21 | April 2, May 27. |
| Chrysomela Gotting ap. | March 15. | |
| Black ants (formica nigra) ap. | March 15, April 22 | March 2, May 18. |
| Ephemeræbisetæ ap. | March 16. | |
| Gooseberry (ribes grossularia) l. | March 17, April 11 | Feb. 26, April 9. |
| Common stitchwort (stellaria holostea) fl. | March 17, May 19 | March 8, May 7. |
| Wood anemone (anemone nemorosa) fl. | March 17, April 22 | Feb. 27, April 10. |
| Blackbird (turdus merula) lays | March 17 | April 14, young ones May 19. |
| Raven (corvus corax) sits | March 17 | April 1, builds. |
| Wheatear (sylvia œnanthe) ap. | March 18—30 | March 13, May 23, last seen Oct. 26. |
| Musk-wood crowfoot (adoxa moschatellina) fl. | March 18, April 13 | Feb. 23, April 28. |
| Willow-wren (sylvia trochilus) ap. | March 19, April 13 | March 30, May 16, sits May 27, last |
| Fumaria bulbosa fl. | March 19. | [seen Oct. 23. |
| Elm (ulmus campestris) fl. | March 19, April 4 | Feb. 17, Apr. 25. [ones April 30. |
| Turkey (meleagris gallopavo) lays | March 19, April 7 | March 18—25, sits April 4, young |

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| House-pigeons (columba domestica) sit | March 20 | March 20, young hatched. |
| Marsh marigold (caltha palustris) fl. | March 20, April 14 | March 22, May 8. |
| Buzz-fly (bombylius medius) ap. | March 21, April 28 | March 15, April 30. |
| Sand-martin (hirundo riparia) ap. | March 21, April 12 | April 8, May 16, last seen Sept. 8. |
| Snake (coluber natrix) ap. | March 22—30 | March 3, April 29, last seen Oct. 2. |
| Horse ant (formica herculeana) ap. | March 22, April 18 | Feb. 4, March 26, last seen Nov. 12. |
| Greenfinch (loxia chloris) sings | March 22, April 22 | March 6, April 26. |
| Ivy (hedera helix) berries ripe | March 23, April 14 | Feb. 16, May 19. |
| Periwinkle (vinca minor) fl. | March 25 | Feb. 6, May 7. |
| Spurge laurel (daphne laureola) fl. | March 25, April 1 | April 12—22. |
| Swallow (hirundo rustica) ap. | March 26, April 20 | April 7—27, last seen Nov. 16. |
| Black-cap (sylvia atricapilla) heard | March 26, May 4 | Apr. 14, May 18, seen Apr. 14, May 20, last seen Sept. 19. |
| Young ducks hatched | March 27 | April 6, May 16. |
| Golden saxifrage (chrysosplenium oppositifolium) fl. | March 27, April 9 | Feb. 7, March 27. |
| Martin (hirundo urbica) ap. | March 28, May 1 | April 14, May 8, last seen Dec. 8. |
| Double hyacinth (hyacinthus orientalis) fl. | March 29, April 22 | March 13, April 24. |
| Young geese (anas anser) | March 29 | March 29, April 19. |
| Wood sorrel (oxalis acetosella) fl. | March 30, April 22 | Feb. 26, Apr. 26. |
| Ringousel (turdus torquatus) seen | March 30, April 17 | October 11. |
| Barley (hordeum sativum) sown | March 31, April 30 | April 12, May 20. |
| Nightingale (sylvia luscinia) sings | April 1, May 1 | April 5, July 4, last seen Aug. 29. |
| Ash (fraxinus excelsior) fl. | April 1, May 4 | March 16, May 8. |
| Spiders' webs on the surface of the ground | April 1 | |
| Chequered daffodil (fritillaria meleagris) fl. | April 2—24 | April 15, May 1. |

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| Julus terrestris ap. | April 2 | |
| Cowslip (primula veris) fl. | April 3—24 | March 3, May 17. |
| Ground-ivy (glecoma hederacea) fl. | April 3—15 | March 2, April 16. |
| Snipe pipes | April 3 | |
| Box-tree (buxus sempervirens) fl. | April 3 | March 27, May 8. |
| Elm (ulmus campestris) l. | April 3 | April 2, May 19. |
| Gooseberry (ribes hortense) fl. | April 3—14. | March 21, May 1. |
| Currant (ribes hortense) fl. | April 3—5 | March 24, April 28. |
| Pear-tree (pyrus communis) fl. | April 3, May 29 | March 30, April 30. |
| Lacerta vulgaris (newt or eft) ap. | April 4 | Feb. 17, April 15, last seen Oct. 9. |
| Dogs' mercury (mercurialis perennis) fl. | April 5—19 | Jan. 20, April 16. |
| Wych elm (ulmus glabra seu montana of Smith) fl. | April 5 | April 19, May 10. |
| Ladysmock (cardamine pratensis) fl. | April 6—20 | Feb. 21, April 26. |
| Cuckoo (cuculus canorus) heard | April 7—26. | April 15, May 3, last heard June 28. |
| Black-thorn (prunus spinosa) fl. | April 7, May 10 | March 16, May 8. |
| Death-watch (termes pulsatorius) beats | April 7 | March, 26, May 28. |
| Gudgeon spawns | April 7 | |
| Red-start (sylvia phœnicurus) ap. | April 8—28 | April 5, sings April 25, last seen |
| Crown imperial (fritillaria imperialis) fl. | April 8—24. | April 1, May 13. [Sept. 30. |
| Tit-lark (alauda pratensis) sings | April 9—19 | April 14—29, sits June 16—17. |
| Beech (fagus sylvatica) l. | April 10, May 8 | April 24, May 25. |
| Shell-snail (helix memoralis) comes out in troops | April 11, May 9 | May 17, June 11 ap. |
| Middle yellow wren, ap. | April 11 | |
| Swift (hirundo apus) ap. | April 13, May 7 | April 28, May 19. |
| Stinging-fly (canops calcitrans) ap. | April 14, May 17 | |

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| Whitlow grass (draba verna) fl. | April 14 | Jan 15, March 24. |
| Larch-tree (pinus-larix rubra) l. | April 14 | April 1, May 9. |
| Whitethroat (sylvia cinerea) ap. | April 14, May 14 | April 14, May 5, sings May 8—10, last seen Sept. 23. |
| Red ant (formica rubra) ap. | April 14 | April 9, June 26. |
| Mole cricket (gryllus gryllotalpa) churs | April 14 | |
| Second willow or laughing wren ap. | April 14—19—23 | |
| Red rattle (pedicularis sylvatica) fl. | April 15—19 | April 10, June 4. |
| Common flesh-fly (musca carnaria) ap. | April 15 | |
| Lady-cow (coccinella bipunctata) ap. | April 16 | |
| Grasshopper lark (alauda locustæ voce) ap. | April 16—30 | |
| Willow wren, its shivering note heard | April 17, May 7 | April 28, May 14. |
| Middle willow wren (regulus non cristatus medius) ap. | April 17—27 | |
| Wild cherry (prunus cerasus) fl. | April 18, May 12 | March 30, May 10. |
| Garden cherry (prunus cerasus) fl. | April 18, May 11 | March 25, May 6. |
| Plum (prunus domestica) fl. | April 18, May 5 | March 24, May 6. |
| Harebell (hyacinthus non-scriptus seu scilla nutans of Smith) fl. | April 19—25 | March 27, May 8. |
| Turtle (columba turtur) coos | April 20—17 | May 14, Aug. 10, seen. |
| Hawthorn (cratægus seu mespilus oxycantha of Smith) fl. | April 20, June 11 | April 19, May 26. |
| Male fool's orchis (orchis mascula) fl. | April 21 | March 29, May 13. |
| Blue flesh fly (musca vomitoria) ap. | April 21, May 23 | |
| Black snail or slug (limax ater) abounds | April 22 | Feb. 1, Oct. 24 ap. |
| Apple-tree (pyrus malus sativus) fl. | April 22, May 25 | April 11, May 26. |

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| **Large bat, ap.** | April 22, June 11 | |
| **Strawberry,** wild wood (fragaria vesca sylv.) **fl.** | April 23—29 | April 8—9. |
| Sauce alone (erysimum alliaria) fl. | April 23 | March 31, May 8. |
| Wild or bird cherry (prunus avium) fl. | April 24 | March 30, May 10. |
| Apis hypnorum, ap. | April 24 | |
| Musca meridiana, ap. | April 24, May 28 | |
| Wolf-fly (asilus) ap. | April 25 | |
| Cabbage butterfly (papilio brassicæ) ap. | April 28, May 20 | April 29, June 10. |
| Dragon-fly (libellula) ap. | April 30, May 21 | April 18, May 13, last seen Nov. 10. |
| Sycamore (acer pseudoplatanus) fl. | April 30, June 6 | April 20, June 4. |
| Bombylius minor, ap. | May 1 | |
| Glow-worm (lampyris noctiluca) shines | May 1, June 11 | June 19, Sept. 28. |
| Fern-owl or goatsucker (caprimulgus europæus) ap. | May 1—26 | May 16, Sept. 14. |
| Common bugle (ajuga reptans) fl. | May 1 | March 27, May 10. |
| Field crickets (gryllus campestris) crink | May 2—24 | |
| Chaffer or May-bug (scarabæus melolontha) ap. | May 2—26 | May 2, July 7. |
| Honeysuckle (lonicera periclymenum) fl. | May 3—30 | April 24, June 21. |
| Toothwort (lathræa squamaria) fl. | May 4—12 | |
| Shell-snails copulate | May 4, June 17 | |
| Sedge warbler (sylvia salicaria) sings | May 4 | June 2—30. |
| Mealy tree (viburnum lantana) fl. | May 5—17 | April 25, May 22. |
| Fly-catcher (stoparolas. muscicapa grisola) ap. | May 10—30 | April 29, May 21. |
| Apis longicornis, ap. | May 10, June 9 | |
| Sedge warbler (sylvia salicaria) ap. | May 11—13 | August 2. |
| **Oak** (quercus robur) fl. | May 13—15 | April 29, June 4. |

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| Admiral butterfly (papilio atalanta) ap. | May 13 | |
| Orange-tip (papilio cardamines) ap. | May 14 | March 30, May 19. |
| Beech (fagus sylvatica) fl. | May 15—26 | April 23, May 28. |
| Common maple (acer campestre) fl. | May 16 | April 24, May 27. |
| Barberry-tree (berberis vulgaris) fl. | May 17—26 | April 28, June 4. |
| Wood argus butterfly (papilio ægeria) ap. | May 17 | |
| Orange lily (lilium bulbiferum) fl. | May 18, June 11 | June 14, July 22. |
| Burnet moth (sphinx filipendulæ) ap. | May 18, June 13 | May 24, June 26. |
| Walnut (juglans regia) l. | May 18 | April 10, June 1. |
| Laburnum (cytisus laburnum) fl. | May 18, June 5 | May 1, June 23. |
| Forest fly (hippobosca equina) ap. | May 18, June 9 | |
| Saintfoin (hedysarum onobrychis) fl. | May 19, June 8 | May 21, July 28. |
| Peony (pæonia officinalis) fl. | May 20, June 15 | April 18, May 26. |
| Horse chestnut (æsculus hippocastanum) fl. | May 21, June 9 | April 19, June 7. |
| Lilac (syringa vulgaris) fl. | May 21 | April 15, May 30. |
| Columbine (aquilegia vulgaris) fl. | May 21—27 | May 6, June 13. |
| Medlar (mespilus germanica) fl. | May 21, June 20 | April 8, June 19. |
| Tormentil (tormentilla erecta seu officinalis of Smith) fl. | May 21 | April 17, June 11. |
| Lily of the valley (convallaria majalis) fl. | May 22 | April 27, June 13. |
| Bees (apis mellifica) swarm | May 22, July 22 | May 12, June 23. |
| Woodroof (asperula odorata) fl. | May 22—25 | April 14, June 4. |
| Wasp, female (vespa vulgaris) ap. | May 23 | April 2, June 4, last seen Nov. 2. |
| Mountain ash (sorbus seu pyrus aucuparia of Smith) fl. | May 23, June 8 | April 20, June 8. |
| Birds-nest orchis (ophrys nidus avis) fl. | May 24, June 11 | May 18, June 12. |
| White-beam tree (cratægus seu pyrus aria of Smith) l. | May 24, June 4 | May 3. |

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| Milkwort (polygala vulgaris) fl. | May 24, June 7 | April 13, June 2. |
| Dwarf cistus (cistus helianthemum) fl. | May 25 | May 4, Aug. 8. |
| Gelder rose (viburnum opulus) fl. | May 26 | May 10, June 8. |
| Common elder (sambucus nigra) fl. | May 26, June 25 | May 6, June 17. |
| Cantharis noctiluca, ap. | May 26 | |
| Apis longicornis bores holes in walks | May 27, June 9 | |
| Mulberry-tree (morus nigra) l. | May 27, June 13 | May 20, June 11. |
| Wild service tree (cratægus seu pyrus torminalis of Smith) fl. | May 27 | May 13, June 19. |
| Sanicle (sanicula europæa) fl. | May 27, June 13 | April 23, June 4. |
| Avens (geum urbanum) fl. | May 28 | May 9, June 11. |
| Female fool's orchis (orchis morio) fl. | May 28 | April 17, May 20. |
| Ragged Robin (lychnis flos cuculi) fl. | May 29, June 1 | May 12, June 8. |
| Burnet (poterium sanguisorba) fl. | May 29 | April 30, Aug. 7. |
| Foxglove (digitalis purpurea) fl. | May 30, June 22 | May 23, June 15. |
| Corn-flag (gladiolus communis) fl. | May 30, June 20 | June 9, July 8. |
| Serapias longifol. fl. | May 30, June 13 | |
| Raspberry (rubus idæus) fl. | May 30, June 21 | May 10, June 16. |
| Herb Robert (geranium Robertianum) fl. | May 30 | March 7, May 16. |
| Figwort (scrophularia nodosa) fl. | May 31 | May 12, June 20. |
| Gromwell (lithospermum officinale) fl. | May 31 | May 10—24. |
| Wood spurge (euphorbia amygdaloides) fl. | June 1 | March 23, May 13. |
| Ramsons (allium ursinum) fl. | June 1 | April 21, June 4. |
| Mouse-ear scorpion grass (myosotis scorpioides) fl. | June 1 | April 11, June 1. |
| Grasshopper (gryllus grossus) ap. | June 1—14 | March 25, July 6, last seen Nov. 8. |

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| Rose (rosa hortensis) fl. | June 1—21 | June 7, July 1. |
| Mouse-ear hawkweed (hieracium pilosella) fl. | June 1, July 16 | April 19, June 12. |
| Buckbean (menyanthes trifoliata) fl. | June 1 | April 20, June 8. |
| Rose-chaffer (scarabæus auratus) ap. | June 2—8 | April 18, Aug. 4. |
| Sheep (ovis aries) shorn | June 2—23 | May 23, June 17. |
| Water-flag (iris pseudo-acorus) fl. | June 2 | May 8, June 9. |
| Cultivated rye (secale cereale) fl. | June 2 | May 27. |
| Hounds' tongue (cynoglossum officinale) fl. | June 2 | May 11, June 7. |
| Helleborine (serapias latifolia) fl. | June 2, Aug. 6 | July 22, Sept. 6. |
| Green-gold fly (musca cæsar) ap. | June 2. | |
| Argus butterfly (papilla moera) ap. | June 2. | |
| Spearwort (ranunculus flammula) fl. | June 3 | April 25, June 13. |
| Birdsfoot trefoil (lotus corniculatus) fl. | June 3 | April 10, June 3. |
| Fraxinella, or white dittany (dictamnus albus) fl. | June 3—11 | June 9, July 24. |
| Phryganea nigra, ap. | June 3. | |
| Angler's May-fly (ephemera vulg.) ap. | June 3—14. | |
| Ladies' finger (anthyllis vulneraria) fl. | June 4 | June 1, Aug. 16. |
| Bee-orchis (ophrys apifera) fl. | June 4, July 4. | |
| Pink (dianthus deltoides) fl. | June 5—19 | May 26, July 6. |
| Mock orange (philadelphus coronarius) fl. | June 5 | May 16, June 23. |
| Libellula virgo, ap. | June 5—20. | |
| Vine (vitis vinifera) fl. | June 7, July 30 | June 18, July 29. |
| Portugal laurel (prunus lusitanicus) fl. | June 8, July 1 | June 3, July 16. |
| Purple-spotted martagon (lilium martagon) fl. | June 8—25 | June 18, July 19. |
| Meadow cranes-bill (geranium pratense) fl. | June 8, Aug. 1. | |

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| Black bryony (tamus communis) fl. | June 8 | May 15, June 21. |
| Field pea (pisum sativum arvense) fl. | June 9 | May 15, June 21. |
| Bladder campion (cucubalus behen seu silene inflata of Smith) fl. | June 9 | May 4, July 13. |
| Bryony (brionia alba) fl. | June 9 | May 13, Aug. 17. |
| Hedge-nettle (stachys sylvatica) fl. | June 10 | May 28, June 24. |
| Bittersweet (solanum dulcamara) fl. | June 11 | May 15, June 20. |
| Walnut (juglans regia) fl. | June 12 | April 18, June 1. |
| Phallus impudicus, ap. | June 12, July 23. | |
| Rosebay willow-herb (epilobium angustifolium) fl. | June 12 | June 4, July 28. |
| Wheat (triticum hybernum) fl. | June 13, July 22 | June 4—30. |
| Comfrey (symphytum officinale) fl. | June 13 | May 4, June 23. |
| Yellow pimpernel (lysimachia nemorum) fl. | June 13—30 | April 10, June 12. |
| Tremella nostoc, ap. | June 15, Aug. 24. | |
| Buckthorn (rhamnus catharticus) l. | June 16 | May 25. |
| Cuckow-spit insect (cicada spumaria) ap. | June 16 | June 2—21. |
| Dog-rose (rosa canina) fl. | June 17, 18 | May 24, June 21. |
| Puff-ball (lycoperdon bovista) ap. | June 17, Sept. 3 | May 6, Aug. 19. |
| Mullein (verbascum thapsus) fl. | June 18 | June 10, July 22. |
| Viper's bugloss (echium anglicum seu vulgare of Smith) fl. | June 19 | May 27, July 3. |
| Meadow hay cut | June 19 July 20 | June 18, July 7. |
| Stag-beetle (lucanus cervus) ap. | June 19 | June 14—21. |
| Borage (borago officinalis) fl. | June 20 | April 22, July 26. |
| Spindle-tree (euonymus europæus) fl. | June 20 | May 11, June 25. |

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| Musk thistle (carduus nutans) fl. | June 20, July 4 | June 4, July 25. |
| Dogwood (cornus sanguinea) fl. | June 21 | May 28, June 27. |
| Field scabious (scabiosa arvensis) fl. | June 21 | June 16, Aug. 14. |
| Marsh thistle (carduus palustris) fl. | June 21—27 | May 15, June 19. |
| Dropwort (spiræa filipendula) fl. | June 22, July 9 | May 8, Sept. 3. |
| Great wild valerian (valeriana officinalis) fl. | June 22, July 7 | May 22, July 21. |
| Quail (perdix coturnix) calls | June 22, July 4 | July 23, seen Sept. 1—1 |
| Mountain willow-herb (epilobium montanum) fl. | June 22 | June 5—21. |
| Thistle upon thistle (carduus crispus) fl. | June 23—29 | May 22, July 22. |
| Cow-parsnip (heracleum sphondylium) fl. | June 23 | May 27, July 12. |
| Earth-nut (bunium bulbocastanum seu flexuosum of Smith) fl. | June 23 | May 4—31. |
| Young frogs migrate | June 23, Aug. 2. | |
| Oestrus curvicauda, ap. | June 24. | |
| Vervain (verbena officinalis) fl. | June 24 | June 10, July 17. |
| Corn poppy (papaver rhoeas) fl. | June 24 | April 30, July 15. |
| Self-heal (prunella vulgaris) fl. | June 24 | June 7—23. |
| Agrimony (agrimonia eupatoria) fl. | June 24—29 | June 7, July 9. |
| Great horse-fly (tabanus bovinus) ap. | June 24, Aug. 2. | |
| Greater knapweed (centaurea scabiosa) fl. | June 25 | June 7, Aug. 14. |
| Mushroom (agaricus campestris) ap. | June 26, Aug. 30 | April 16, Aug. 16. |
| Common mallow (malva sylvestris) fl. | June 26 | May 27, July 13. |
| Dwarf mallow (malva rotundifolia) fl. | June 26 | May 12, July 20. |
| St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum) fl. | June 26 | June 15, July 12. |
| Broom-rape (orobanche major) fl. | June 27, July 4 | May 9, July 25. |

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| Henbane (hyoscyamus niger) fl. | June 27 | May 13, June 19. |
| Goats-beard (tragopogon pratense) fl. | June 27 | June 5—14. |
| Deadly nightshade (atropa belladonna) fl. | June 27 | May 22, Aug. 14 |
| Truffles begin to be found | June 28, July 29 | |
| Young partridges fly | June 28, July 31 | July 8—28. |
| Lime-tree (tilia europæa) fl. | June 28, July 31 | June 12, July 30. |
| Spearthistle (carduus lanceolatus) fl. | June 28, July 12 | June 27, July 18. |
| Meadow-sweet (spiræa ulmaria) fl. | June 28 | June 16, July 24. |
| Greenweed (genista tinctoria) fl. | June 28 | June 4, July 24. |
| Wild thyme (thymus serpyllum) fl. | June 28 | June 6, July 19. |
| Stachys germanic. fl. | June 29, July 20 | |
| Day-lily (hemerocallis flava) fl. | June 29, July 4 | May 29, June 9. |
| Jasmine (jasminum officinale) fl. | June 29, July 30 | June 27, July 21. |
| Holly-oak (alcea rosea) fl. | June 29, Aug. 4 | July 4, Sept. 7. |
| Monotropa hypopithys, fl. | June 29, July 23. | |
| Ladies' bedstraw (galium verum) fl. | June 29 | June 22, Aug. 3. |
| Galium palustre, fl. | June 29. | |
| Nipplewort (lapsana communis) fl. | June 29 | May 30, July 24. |
| Welted thistle (carduus acanthoides) fl. | June 29. | |
| Sneezewort (achillea ptarmica) fl. | June 30 | June 22, Aug. 3. |
| Musk mallow (malva moschata) fl. | June 30 | June 9, July 14. |
| Pimpernel (anagallis arvensis) fl. | June 30 | May 4, June 22. |
| Hoary beetle (scarabæus solstit.) ap. | June 30, July 17. | |
| Corn saw-wort (serratula arvensis seu carduus arvensis of Smith) fl. | July 1 | June 15, July 15. |

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| Pheasant's eye (adonis annua seu autumnalis of Smith) fl. | July 1 | April 11, July 15. |
| Red eyebright (euphrasia seu bartsia odontites of Smith) fl. | July 2 | June 20, Aug. 10. |
| Thorough wax (bupleurum rotundifol.) fl. | July 2 | |
| Cockle (agrostemma githago) fl. | July 2 | May 14, July 25. |
| Ivy-leaved wild lettuce (prenanthes muralis) fl. | July 2 | June 2, July 25. |
| Fever few (matricaria seu pyrethrum parthenium of Smith) fl. | July 2 | June 19, July 24. |
| Wall pepper (sedum acre) fl. | July 3 | June 8, July 12. |
| Privet (ligustrum vulgare) fl. | July 3 | June 3, July 13. |
| Common toadflax (antirrhinum linaria) fl. | July 3 | June 21, Aug. 3. |
| Perennial wild flax (linum perenne) fl. | July 4 | April 21, July 6. |
| Whortleberries ripe (vaccinium ulig.) | July 4—24. | |
| Yellow base rocket (reseda lutea) fl. | July 5 | July 19. |
| Blue-bottle (centaurea cyanus) fl. | July 5 | May 15, Oct. 14. |
| Dwarf carline thistle (carduus acaulis) fl. | July 5—12 | June 30, Aug. 4. |
| Bull-rush, or cats-tail (typha latifolia) fl. | July 6 | June 29, July 21. |
| Spiked willow-herb (lythrum salicaria) fl. | July 6 | June 24, Aug. 17. |
| Black mullein (verbascum niger) fl. | July 6. | |
| Chrysanthemum coronarium fl. | July 6 | May 28, July 28. |
| Marigolds (calendula officinalis) fl. | July 6—9 | April 20, July 16. |
| Little field madder (sherardia arvensis) fl. | July 7 | Jan. 11, June 6. |
| Calamint (melissa seu thymus calamintha of Smith) fl. | July 7 | July 21. |
| Black horehound (ballota nigra) fl. | July 7 | June 16, Sept. 12. |



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| Wood betony (betonica officinalis) fl. | July 8—19 | June 10, July 15. |
| Round-leaved bell-flower (campanula rotundifolia) fl. | July 8 | June 12, July 29. |
| All-good (chenopodium bonus henricus) fl. | July 8 | April 21, June 15. |
| Wild-carrot (daucus carota) fl. | July 8 | June 7, July 14. |
| Indian cress (epopœolum majus) fl. | July 8—20 | June 11, July 25. |
| Cat-mint (nepata cataria) fl. | July 9. | |
| Cow-wheat (melampyrum sylvaticum seu pratense of Smith) fl. | July 9 | May 2, June 22. |
| Crosswort (valantia cruciata seu galium cruciatum of Smith) fl. | July 9 | April 10, May 28. |
| Cranberries ripe | July 9—27. | |
| Tufted vetch (vicia cracca) fl. | July 10 | May 31, July 8. |
| Wood vetch (vicia sylvat.) fl. | July 10. | |
| Little throat-wort (campanula glomerata) fl. | July 11 | July 28, Aug. 18. |
| Sheep's scabious (jasione montana) fl. | July 11 | June 10, July 25. |
| Pastinaca sylv. fl. | July 12. | |
| White lily (lilium candidum) fl. | July 12 | June 21, July 22. |
| Hemlock (conium maculatum) fl. | July 18 | June 4, July 20. |
| Caucalis anthriscus fl. | July 13. | |
| Flying ants ap. | July 13—Aug. 11 | Aug. 20, Sept. 19. |
| Moneywort (lysimachia nummularia) fl. | July 13 | June 14, Aug. 16. |
| Scarlet martagon (lilium chalcedonicum) fl. | July 14—Aug. 4 | June 21, Aug. 6. |
| Lesser stitchwort (stellaria graminea) fl. | July 14 | May 8, June 28. |
| Fool's parsley (æthusa cynapium) fl. | July 14 | June 9, Aug. 9. |
| Dwarf elder (sambucus ebulus) fl. | July 14—29. | |

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| Swallows and martins congregate | July 14, Aug. 29 | Aug. 12, Sept. 8. |
| Potato (solanum tuberosum) fl. | July 14 | June 3, July 12. |
| Angelica sylv. fl. | July 15. | |
| Digitalis ferrugin. fl. | July 15—25. | |
| Ragwort (senecio jacobæa) fl. | July 15 | June 22, July 13. |
| Golden rod (solidago virgaureæ) fl. | July 15 | July 7, Aug. 29. |
| Star thistle (centaurea calcitrapa) fl. | July 16 | July 16, Aug. 16. |
| Tree primrose (œnothera biennis) fl. | July 16 | June 12, July 18. |
| Peas (pisum sativum) cut | July 17, Aug. 14 | July 13, Aug. 15. |
| Galega officin. fl. | July 17. | |
| Apricots (prunus armeniaca) ripe | July 17, Aug. 21 | July 5, Aug. 16. |
| Crown's allheal (stachys palustris) fl. | July 17 | June 12, July 14. |
| Branching willow-herb (epilobium ramos.) fl. | July 17. | |
| Rye harvest begins | July 17, Aug. 7. | |
| Yellow centaury (chlora perfoliata) fl. | July 18, Aug. 15 | June 15, Aug. 13. |
| Yellow vetchling (lathyrus aphaca) fl. | July 18. | |
| Enchanter's nightshade (circœa lutetiana) fl. | July 18 | June 20, July 27. |
| Water hemp agrimony (eupatorium cannabinum) fl. | July 18 | July 4, Aug. 6. |
| Giant throatwort (campanula trachelium) fl. | July 19 | July 13, Aug. 14. |
| Eyebright (euphrasia officinalis) fl. | July 19 | May 28, July 19. |
| Hops (humulus lupulus) fl. | July 19, Aug. 10 | July 20, Aug. 17. |
| Poultry moult | July 19. | |
| Dodder (cuscuta europæa seu epithymum of Smith) fl. | July 20 | July 9, Aug. 7. |
| Lesser centaury (gentiana seu chironia centarium of Smith) fl. | July 20 | June 3, July 19. |



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| Creeping water parsnep (sium nodiflorum) fl. | July 20 | July 10, Sept. 11. |
| Common spurrey (spergula arvensis) fl. | July 21 | April 10, July 16. |
| Wild clover (trifolium pratense) fl. | July 21 | May 2, June 7. |
| Buckwheat (polygonum fagopyrum) fl. | July 21 | June 27, July 10. |
| Wheat harvest begins | July 21, Aug. 23 | July 11, Aug. 26. |
| Great burr-reed (sparganium erectum) fl. | July 22 | June 10, July 23. |
| Marsh St. John's-wort (hypericum elodes) fl. | July 22—31 | June 16, Aug. 10. |
| Sun-dew (drosera rotundifolia) fl. | July 22 | Aug. 1. |
| March cinquefoil (comarum palustre) fl. | July 22 | May 27, July 12. |
| Wild cherries ripe | July 22. | |
| Lancashire asphodel (anthericum ossifragum) fl. | July 22 | June 31, July 29. |
| Hooded willow-herb (scutellaria galericulata) fl. | July 23 | June 2, July 31. |
| Water dropwort (œnanthe fistulos.) fl. | July 23. | |
| Horehound (marrubium vulg.) fl. | July 23. | |
| Seseli carnifol. fl. | July 24. | |
| Water plantain (alisma plantago) fl. | July 24 | May 1, July 31. |
| Alopecurus myosuroides fl. | July 25. | |
| Virgin's bower (clematis vitalba) fl. | July 25, Aug. 9 | July 13, Aug. 14. |
| Bees kill the drones | July 25. | |
| Teasel (dipsacus sylvestris) fl. | July 26 | July 16, Aug. 3. |
| Wild marjoram (origanum vulgare) fl. | July 26 | July 17, Aug. 29. |
| Swifts (hirundo apus) begin to depart | July 27—29 | Aug. 5. |
| Small wild teasel (dipsacus pilosus) fl. | July 28, 29. | |
| Wood sage (teucrium scorodonia) fl. | July 28 | June 17, July 24. |
| Everlasting pea (lathyrus latifolius) fl. | July 28 | June 20, July 30. |

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| Trailing St. John's-wort (hypericum humifusum) fl. | July 29 | May 20, June 22. |
| White hellebore (veratrum album) fl. | July 30 | July 18—22. |
| Camomile (anthemis nobilis) fl. | July 30 | June 21, Aug. 20. |
| Lesser field scabious (scabiosa columbaria) fl. | July 30 | July 13, Aug. 9. |
| Sun-flower (helianthus multiflorus) fl. | July 31, Aug. 6 | July 4, Aug. 22. |
| Yellow loosestrife (lysimachia vulgaris) fl. | July 31 | July 2, Aug. 7. |
| Swift (hirundo apus) last seen | July 31, Aug. 27 | Aug. 11. |
| Oats (avena sativa) cut | Aug. 1—16 | July 26, Aug. 19. |
| Barley (hordeum sativum) cut | Aug. 1—26 | July 27, Sept. 4. |
| Lesser hooded willow-herb (scutelaria minor) fl. | Aug. 1 | Aug. 8, Sept. 7. |
| Middle fleabane (inula disinterica) fl. | Aug. 2 | July 7, Aug. 3. |
| Apis manicata, ap. | Aug. 2. | |
| Swallow-tailed butterfly (papilio machaon) ap. | Aug. 2 | April 20, June 7, last seen Aug. 28. |
| Whame or burrel-fly (œstrus bovis) lays eggs on horses. | Aug. 3—19. | |
| Sow thistle (sonchus arvensis) fl. | Aug. 3 | June 17, July 21. |
| Plantain fritillary (papilio cinxia) ap. | Aug. 3. | |
| Yellow succory (picris hieracioides) fl. | Aug. 4 | June 6—25. |
| Musca mystacea, ap. | | |
| Canterbury bells (campanula medium) fl. | Aug. 5 | June 5, Aug. 11. |
| Mentha longifol. fl. | Aug. 5. | |
| Carline thistle (carlina vulgaris) fl. | Aug. 7 | July 21, Aug. 18. |
| Venetian sumach (rhus cotinus) fl. | Aug. 7 | June 5, July 20. |
| Ptinus pectinicornis ap. | Aug. 7. | |
| Burdock (arctium lappa) fl. | Aug. 8 | June 17, Aug. 4. |
| Fell-wort (gentiana amarella) fl. | Aug. 8, Sept. 3. | |

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| Wormwood (artemisia absinthium) fl. | Aug. 8 | July 22, Aug. 21. |
| Mugwort (artemisia vulgaris) fl. | Aug. 8 | July 9, Aug. 10. |
| St. Barnaby's thistle (centauria solstit.) fl. | Aug. 10. | |
| Meadow saffron (colchicum autumnale) fl. | Aug. 10, Sept. 13 | Aug. 15, Sept. 29. |
| Michaelmas daisy (aster tradescantia) fl. | Aug. 12, Sept. 27 | Aug. 11, Oct. 8. |
| Meadow rue (thalictrum flavum) fl. | Aug. 14. | |
| Sea holly (eryngium marit.) fl. | Aug. 14. | |
| China aster (aster chinensis) fl. | Aug. 14, Sept. 28 | Aug. 6, Oct. 2. |
| Boletus albus ap. | Aug. 14 | May 10. |
| Less Venus looking-glass (campanula hybrida) fl. | Aug. 15 | May 14. |
| Carthamus tinctor fl. | Aug. 15. | |
| Goldfinch (fringilla carduelis) young broods ap. | Aug. 15 | June 15. |
| Lapwings (tringa vanellus) congregate | Aug. 15, Sept. 12 | Sept. 25, Feb. 4. |
| Black-eyed marble butterfly (papilio semele) ap. | Aug. 15. | |
| Birds reassume their spring notes | Aug. 16. | |
| Devil's bit (scabiosa succisa) fl. | Aug. 17 | June 22, Aug. 23. |
| Thistle down floats | Aug. 17, Sept. 10. | |
| Ploughman's spikenard (conyza squarrosa) fl. | Aug. 18. | |
| Autumnal dandelion (leontodon autumnale) fl. | Aug. 18 | July 25. |
| Flies about in windows | Aug. 18. | |
| Linnets (fringilla linota) congregate | Aug. 18, Nov. 1 | Aug. 22, Nov. 8. |
| Bulls make their shrill autumnal noise | Aug. 20. | |
| Aster amellus fl. | Aug. 22. | |
| Balsam (impatiens balsamina) fl. | Aug. 23 | May 22, July 26. |
| Milk thistle (carduus marinus) fl. | Aug. 24 | April 21, July 18. |

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| Hop-picking begins | Aug. 24, Sept. 17 | Sept. 1—15. |
| Beech (fagus sylvatica) turns yellow | Aug. 24, Sept. 22 | Sept. 5—29. |
| Soapwort (saponaria officinalis) fl. | Aug. 25 | July 19, Aug. 23. |
| Ladies traces (ophrys spiralis) fl. | Aug. 27, Sept. 12 | Aug. 18, Sept. 18. |
| Small golden black-spotted butterfly (papilio phlæas) ap. | Aug. 29 | |
| Swallow (hirundo rustica) sings | Aug. 29 | April 11, Aug. 20. |
| Althæa frutex (hibiscus syriacus) fl. | Aug. 30, Sept. 2 | July 20, Sept. 28. |
| Great fritillary (papilio paphia) ap. | Aug. 30. | |
| Willow red under-wing moth (phalæna pacta) ap. | Aug. 31. | |
| Stone curlew (otis œdicnemus) clamours | Sept. 1, Nov. 7 | June 17. |
| Phalæna russula, ap. | Sept. 1. | |
| Grapes ripen | Sept. 4, Oct. 24 | Aug. 31, Nov. 4. |
| Wood owls hoot | Sept. 4, Nov. 9. | |
| Saffron butterfly (papilio hyale) ap. | Sept. 4 | Aug. 5, Sept. 26. |
| Ringousel appears on its autumnal visit | Sept. 4—30. | |
| Flycatcher (musicapa grisola) last seen | Sept. 6—29 | Sept. 4—30. |
| Beans (vicia faba) cut | Sept. 11 | Aug. 9, Oct. 14. |
| Ivy (hedera helix) fl. | Sept. 12, Oct. 2 | Sept. 18, Oct. 28. |
| Stares congregate | Sept. 12, Nov. 1 | June 4, March 21. |
| Wild honeysuckles fl. a second time | Sept. 25. | |
| Woodlark sings | Sept. 28, Oct. 24. | |
| Woodcock (scolopax rusticola) returns | Sept. 29, Nov. 11 | Oct. 1, Nov. 1, young ones April 28, |
| Strawberry-tree (arbutus unedo) fl. | Oct. 1 | May 21, Dec. 10. [last seen April. |
| Wheat sown | Oct. 3, Nov. 9 | Sept. 23, Oct. 19. |
| Swallows last seen. (N.B. The house martin the latest.) | Oct. 4, Nov. 5 | Nov. 16. [21, last seen April 13. |
| Redwing (turdus iliacus) comes | Oct. 10, Nov. 10 | Oct. 1, Dec. 18, sings Feb. 10, March |

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| Fieldfare (turdus pilaris) returns | Oct. 12, Nov. 23 | Oct. 13, Nov. 18, last seen May 1. |
| Gossamer fills the air | Oct. 15—27. | |
| Chinese holly-oak (alcea rosea) fl. | Oct. 19 | July 7, Aug. 21. |
| Hen chaffinches congregate | Oct. 20, Dec. 31. | |
| Wood pigeons come | Oct. 23, Dec. 27. | |
| Royston crow (corvus cornix) returns | Oct. 23, Nov. 29 | Oct. 13, Nov. 17, last seen April 15. |
| Snipe (scolopax Gallinago) returns | Oct. 25, Nov. 20 | Sept. 29, Nov. 11, last seen April 14. |
| Tortoise begins to bury himself | Oct. 27, Nov. 26. | |
| Rooks (corvus frugilegus) return to their nest trees | Oct. 31, Dec. 25 | June 29, Oct. 20. |
| Bucks grunt | Nov. 1. | |
| Primrose (primula vulgaris) fl. | Nov. 10 | Oct. 7, Dec. 30. |
| Green whistling plover ap. | Nov. 13, 14. | |
| Helvella mitra ap. | Nov. 16. | |
| Greenfinches flock | Nov. 27. | |
| Hepatica fl. | Nov. 30, Dec. 29 | Feb. 19. |
| Furze (ulex europæus) fl. | Dec. 4—21 | Dec. 16—31. |
| Polyanthus (primula polyanthus) fl. | Dec. 7—16 | Dec. 31. |
| Young lambs dropped | Dec. 11—27 | Dec. 12, Feb. 21. |
| Moles work in throwing up hillocks | Dec. 12—23. | |
| Helleborus fœtidus fl. | Dec. 14—30. | |
| Daisy (bellis perennis) fl. | Dec. 15. | Dec. 26—31. |
| Wall-flower (cheiranthus cheiri seu fruticulosus of Smith) fl. | Dec. 15 | Nov. 5. |
| Mezereon fl. | Dec. 15. | |
| Snowdrop fl. | Dec. 29. | |

*In sese vertitur annuc.*

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# SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

TO

# WHITE'S NATURAL HISTORY OF SELBORNE.

BY

SIR W. JARDINE, BART.
&c. &c. &c.

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# SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES,

By Sir Wm. Jardine, Bart.

The value of "*White's Natural History of Selborne*" will be best estimated by the number of editions it has passed through, by the extent of the annotations written upon it (many of them by persons of considerable eminence in science), and by the demand which still continues for the work.

In 1829, when Mr. Constable had proceeded so far with his "Miscellany," I was requested to read over and add some notes explanatory of various passages in "Selborne," which he then proposed to form one of the volumes of his collection. To this I agreed, and that edition is the only one with which I have had any connection whatever. At the disarrangement of Mr. Constable's affairs, the "Miscellany" fell into other hands; and editions, in 1832 and 1836, were re-published under my name, with woodcuts and illustrations, of which I knew nothing. Subsequently, various other editions have been published, some of them copying my notes, others annotating upon them, while one or two contained much original information, and were illustrated by beautiful woodcuts. Mr. Bohn having resolved to re-publish the work, under the charge of Mr. Jesse, in his Standard Library, requested me to make any additions I might think necessary to what I had written in 1829. The request was made too late for these to be inserted in the body of the work; but, as many of the notes of 1829 were not in accordance with our knowledge and the general state of Natural History in 1850, I considered the opportunity for correction to be favourable, and have, accordingly, made a few observations and alterations, which are now given in the form of an Appendix,—not that in these I consider the subject exhausted, but that in a work which is so likely to come extensively into the hands of persons of almost every class and age, it is of the utmost importance that all error should be avoided.

W. J.

Jardine Hall,
14*th Nov.*, 1850.

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THE BEECH-TREE.—Letter I., *page* 13, *note.*

The loveliness of the beech is a matter of opinion; but, much as we admire the tree, and liberally plant it, we would adhere, so far as that epithet is concerned, to what we have before written. The beech is a tree selected by all for its expanse and shade (*patula fagus*). We quoted Gilpin in favour of the ash; of the beech he says—"On the whole, however, the massy, full-grown, luxuriant beech is rather a displeasing tree;" and Loudon, though aware of its graceful hanging branches, writes of its "lumpish head." Nevertheless, we are not insensible to what belongs to it, and agree with Sir T. D. Lauder in the opinion that "a noble beech is a magnificent object," and with Mr. Selby that it "combines magnificence with beauty."

GEOLOGY OF SELBORNE.—Letter I., *page* 16, *note* *.

The first of the various editions of "Selborne" which took notice of the geology of the district, was that by E. T. Bennet, Esq., in 1836, who, we believe, examined the locality for the purpose. Mr. Jenyns afterwards used an extract of the note in question for his edition in 1843; and as it is essential to the proper understanding of the text, and the note we appended in 1829, Mr. Bennet will, we trust, not find fault with our now extending the information he has so well given:—"The parish of Selborne is situate on the lower part of the chalk formation, and embraces within it the upper members of the weald. In crossing it from east to west, each strata is visited in the order of super-position. They are four in number; comprising the *Chalk*, the *Upper Green Sand*, the *Gualt*, and the *Lower Green Sand*." It is upon the chalk, so favourable to the growth of beech woods, that the "Hanger" is placed; but the "*Freestone*," upon which the "*Shabey*" oak wood grows, is a part of the green sand, which is here in the form of rock, which "usually rises slowly in a lengthened and widely-spread flat until it terminates suddenly by an abrupt or cliff-like fall, constituting a terrace or escarpment." This is quite different from the rock alluded to in the former note, which usually here and in many parts of Scotland has the name of *Freestone* also applied to it. It is the presence of iron which forms the colouring matter of the *Red Sandstone* or *Freestone*, and of the *Red Till*, that is obnoxious to the larch; and the decay has been observed, also, though not at so early an age, in trees planted on the older or Silurian rocks, where iron, or the traces of it, was present.

THE ELM-TREE.—Letter II., *pages* 16, 17, *notes* † *and* *.

The elms commonly prevalent in Great Britain are now considered as only two; the one alluded to in the text and note, *U. montana* (Bauhinus), and *U. campestris* (Linnæus), the one most commonly met with in Scotland, and producing wood of considerable value; the other, frequent everywhere in the south of England, forming the common hedge-row timber and brushwood, often a part of the fence itself, and also appearing as the often magnificent and picturesque trees of our

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avenues and public parks. The other elms, under various names, may generally be traced as varieties to the stock of one or other of these—*U. suberosa* of authors being one of the more distinct, and, though given a separate place by Mr. Selby, is given so with doubt. The largest recorded Wych elm trees, are, in England, that in Sir Walter Bagot's Park in Staffordshire, mentioned in previous note; in Scotland, the "Trysting-tree," in Teviotdale, Roxburghshire, measured in the beginning of the century, at four feet from the ground, thirty feet in circumference; and in Ireland, a tree at Bawn, about 120 years of age, was 9 feet 8 inches in diameter.

FOSSIL SHELLS.—Letter III., *page* 20.

By some oversight in the printing of the edition in "Constable's Miscellany," the last sentence in the first paragraph of this letter has been omitted, and the same occurs in Mr. Jenyn's edition, and in almost every other, no doubt because there was no engraving contiguous. The sentence is—"The curious foldings of the suture, the one into the other, the alternate flutings or grooves, and the curved form of my specimen being much easier expressed by the pencil than by words, I have caused it to be drawn and engraved." This is of little import, but it is as well to have the edition complete. In the large original quarto copy of 1789, a whole plate is devoted to this fossil. In the various late editions, it has been annotated upon, and first, again, by Mr. Bennet, who states that it is the *Ostrea carinata* (Lamark), a fossil limited and apparently peculiar to the upper green sand (not the chalk), the stratum on which the village of Selborne is built. (See *note*, Bennet's Edit., *page* 12.)

METEOROLOGY.—Letter V., *page* 24.

In Mr. Bennet's edition, a continuation of the Meteorological Register is added for six years—(the fourth edition, 1789, gives it only up to January, 1787)—the two last years of which (1792 and 1793) the amount of rain was very large, far exceeding any of the former quantities; in the first it amounted to 44·93 inches, and in the second to no less than 48·56, exceeding all the previous years, except 1782-3, when it was 50·25 inches. The intelligent gentleman referred to in the note to the above page, was Thomas Barker, of an ancient and respectable family in the county of Rutland, and brother-in-law to our author.

BOG TIMBER.—Letter VI., *page* 27, *note* *.

From Mr. Bennet's note upon the timber of the Selborne bogs, it would appear that in 1835 the supply was not exhausted, several trees having been at that time dug up. In the south of Scotland the oak is the most abundant tree found in the bogs, is very general, in some places extremely abundant, and the brushwood of our present copses frequently accompany it. In the north of Scotland, again, pine-wood is commonly met with and used as we before mentioned, as well for making lights to "burn the water," or to spear salmon by torchlight, for which it answers admirably.

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THE CAPERCAILZIE.—Letter VI., *page* 27, *note* ‡.

Since the date of the above referred-to note, the capercailzie, or wood-grouse, has been re-introduced into the Highlands of Scotland, by the exertions of the Earl of Fife, and more lately by Lord Breadalbane. A few years since, they had increased considerably in the woods around Taymouth, and had even strayed and bred in some adjoining properties.

Several of the American partridges might be introduced, as well as the little Virginian ortyx mentioned. They are a much more numerous group than was supposed at the date of the note, no less than thirty-five species being now described and figured in the beautiful monograph just completed by Mr. Gould. Several are from northern climates, and would in all probability succeed with us.

DEER-STEALING.—Letter VII., *page* 29, *note.*

The following notice, bearing on this subject, appeared in a late number of the "Times" newspaper:—

"OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.—The Solicitors of the 'Woods and Forests' have received instructions to give the necessary Parliamentary notices preparatory to the introduction of a bill to extinguish the right of the Crown to stock the New Forest in Hampshire with deer and other wild beasts of the forest, and to empower Her Majesty to inclose the several portions of the said forest."

MARSH PLANTS.—Letter VIII., *page* 32.

Mr. Bennet tells us that Bin's-pond is now "drained, and cattle graze upon its bed." The plants, therefore, alluded to, and mentioned more particularly in Letter LXXXIV. of present edition, or XLI. part 2, of other editions, will not now be found. Increase of population, cultivation, modern improvements, Railways, Commons' Inclosure Acts, Drainage Acts, &c. &c., have made sad changes in the localities—extirpation and introduction of both animal and vegetable life. White's letters are, therefore, very valuable records of what did exist; and the changes which have taken place can now only be marked by one resident on the spot; but however interesting Mr. Bennet's remarks are on these points, they can only be partial from the limited time he had to spare in the locality, while preparing his edition for the press. In our own vicinity we have seen these changes most marked, and surely progressing. The habitat of many rare muir or marsh plants exists only in recollection or in manuscript. Many birds frequenting unenclosed sub-alpine lands, have gone to seek haunts less intruded on—(are White's stone-curlews as abundant as formerly?)—while from the increase of plantations, a few which did not visit us thirty years since, are now frequent. Cultivation is an enemy to various wild birds not included in the list of game. In Dumfriesshire, associations have been formed for the destruction of rooks, and committees appointed to take charge of districts. There is another in Forfarshire, and fourteen thousand young crows

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were destroyed within the week in the plantations of Inglismaldie. In East Lothian, an association by the local agricultural society was formed last year for the destruction of wood-pigeons; funds were subscribed, and premiums offered for the largest number killed. At Dunglass, the first premium was obtained, for the destruction of 1154 birds and 786 eggs; 916 and 804 birds were killed in other two localities; and, altogether, 8,000 head were computed as destroyed, counting two eggs as equal to one pigeon.

A curious communication relating to the above subject was inserted in the *Lancet*, by Dr. Henry William Fuller, of St. George's Hospital. In certain parts of Hampshire, partridges were found dead in the fields, sitting with their heads erect, and eyes open. Inquiry established that in the district, farmers were in the habit of steeping their wheat in a strong solution of arsenic; Dr. Fuller found it, by analysis, in the viscera of the birds, and traced it to the seed-corn in their crops.

Twelve tons of game left Kirkcudbright in one day; and to the value of four hundred pounds weekly from Kirkcudbright and Wigton.

### The Wood-wren.—Letter X., *page* 38.

The "little yellow-bird," so far as we can judge from the habits described, must be the *Sylvia sibilatrix*, wood-wren of modern British ornithologists. The *Stoparola* of Ray is the *Muscicapa grisola*, or spotted fly-catcher. The habits of feeding are exactly described. (See, further, its habits, Letter XL.) White is also quite right in supposing there are more than one "*Motacilla trochilus*." The true *Motacilla trochilus* of Linnæus, however, is a continental species, and has not yet been found to visit our islands.

### The Black-cap.—Letter X., *page* 39.

The black-cap (*Curruca atracapilla*) is a regular migratory species here, or bird of passage.

Mr. Bennet has copied a note from Mr. Rennie, in his edition, in which he states:—"Dr. Heineken informs us that it (the black-cap) is stationary in Madeira, consequently Sir W. Jardine is wrong in thinking our birds retire thither." We have no doubt whatever that Dr. Heineken is right in "black-caps being stationary in Madeira," but it does not follow from that, that some do not migrate there also. The song thrush is stationary in Great Britain, but hundreds migrate to and from every year, so do the gold-crests, also snipes and many other species. "Where it is *probable* they *partly* retire," are the words of the original note, page 112 of present edition.

### The Water-rat.—Letter X., *page* 39.

Mr. Jenyns, in his edition, has given the best explanation of this passage regarding the *Mus amphibius*, and considered that it refers to the common water rat *Arvicola amphibia*, and that Linnæus was in error when he wrote "*Pedibus palmatis*." There is only one species of water

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rat hitherto known in Great Britain; the black-coloured individuals, *A. ater macgillivray*, found in the north, and which we once captured in Sutherlandshire, being considered as only a variety. It is scarcely possible to decide now what other field mouse may have been referred to in this chapter, and it will be for Mr. Bell, the present proprietor and preserver of Mr. White's retreat, to discover which of the British species are most abundant in his vicinity. For an excellent paper on the distinctions of some of our small mammalia, see Rev. L. Jenyns in "Annals of Natural History," *vol.* vii. *page* 261.

THE FALCON.—Letter X., *page* 40.

Mr. Bennet states that the "Falco" proved to be the *F. peregrinus*, or peregrine falcon. The authority is W. Y. The yellow iris does not, however, agree with this, if in its long kept state White's report could be depended upon.

GROSSHAWK, CROSSBILL, &c.—Letter XI., *page* 41, *notes* * †.

There is little to add to this note, except that specimens of the bird continue to arrive at intervals, and from ornithology being more attended to, they appear to be more frequently discovered; the same localities repeatedly afford specimens, and another was killed in 1849, on the Northumberland coast, not far from Bamborough, in Budle Bay. Mr. Thompson has given a table of its recorded appearance in Ireland, in the first volume of his locally interesting "Birds of Ireland." It has occurred thirty-six times between 1819 and 1847.

The "Grossbeaks" referred to (same page) continue also to occur occasionally, and have been discovered by the late Mr. Doubleday to breed regularly in Epping Forest, from whence he kindly communicated to us both the nest and eggs. He considers their extreme shyness has hitherto kept us in ignorance of their habits, and states that their principal food was the seed of the hornbeam (*Corpinus betulus*). (See further—"Mag. of Zool. and Bot." *vol.* i. *page* 448.)

The Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is far from uncommon, but is very uncertain in its visitations; it is a bird which apparently breeds very early in the season. In our own vicinity, and in Roxburghshire, for several years previous to 1839, they were regularly seen, but not one has appeared since. In one season they remained from November to the July following, but no traces of nidification could be discovered. An excellent account of the structure and anatomy of the bill, and its accessaries, is given by Mr. Yarrell in the "Zoological Journal," Vol. IV. (See note in present Edition, page 124.)

FISH.—Letter XI., *page* 42 *and notes.*

The "Miller's Thumb," in the northern parts of our island, is not generally distributed. We do not know its exact range, but in the northern counties of England it is by no means general.

The broad-nosed eel (*A. latirostris*) is the grig or glut eel of Pennant.

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Yarrell, Br. Fishes, where three British species are enumerated. Mr. Bell could easily ascertain the species of sticklebacks which are found around Selborne. There is a good paper by Dr. Parnell on the sticklebacks, with etchings of the costal plates, in Trans. Roy. Soc. Edinburgh.

BATS.—Letter XI., *page* 43.

Mr. Bell, in his "British Animals," describes seventeen species of bats as inhabitants of this country. It is only of late that the distinctions between nearly allied species have been pointed out, and several may be easily, and are constantly confounded. Mr. Bell has again to tell us which prevail at Selborne.

Pallas, in his travels, mentions a curious superstition regarding bats found in the grottos or natural caves in the neighbourhood of Pertova. In these caves they are in immense abundance, and are found flying and enjoying their gloomy solitudes at all hours. It is the opinion of the surrounding natives, who are very superstitious, that one of these bats dried, and carried suspended about the person as an amulet, will ensure good fortune and prosperity; and that boiling water, in which one of them has been dipped, when given as a drink, will prove an effectual remedy for intermittent fevers or rachitis in children.

MIGRATORY BIRDS.—Letter XIII., *page* 51, *text and note* *.

The great proportion of our migratory birds appear at the seasons of migration to separate into flocks, composed almost entirely of one sex. Thus we know that the males of many of the summer birds of passage arrive before the females; and it has been thought, by some of our ornithologists, that we receive an addition to the numbers of the chaffinch in the end of autumn. About this period they begin to assemble in flocks, and it has been also thought that these flocks were, in many instances, composed of females alone. This is, perhaps, the case to a considerable extent; but from many young males not having attained their full plumage it has been over-rated. In the South of Scotland, at least, the flocks are not of that exclusive sexual character; we have noticed that two-thirds at least were females, while not a half of the remaining third were males in full or nearly perfect plumage. In Ireland, Mr. Thompson states that the females assemble in very large flocks. These, from never being but with flocks of male birds, he is disposed to believe have migrated to this island from more northern latitudes.

THE BUNTING.—Letter XIII., *page* 51, *note* †.

The range of the common bunting extends generally, but locally, northward to Sutherlandshire and the Hebrides.

WAGTAILS.—Letter XIII., *page* 52.

Our original note to the wagtails has been omitted; it is—"*Motacilla*



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*flava*, yellow wagtail, is a summer bird of passage, arriving about the end of May, and leaving us about the end of August or middle of September."—W. J. The yellow wagtails alluded to by White would be the *M. boarula*, which has a black throat in summer; many pairs breed occasionally in suitable localities in Scotland and North of England, but a few only remain over winter, visiting the farm-yards or streams near a dwelling. Locality, however, is the principal breeding requisite, and were the southern counties always suitable we should find it there. Mr. Gould found it breeding last year in Buckinghamshire, near the Chenies, in a beautiful valley between chalk hills, and ascertained that it was not uncommon, while the *Budytes flava*, or yellow wagtail, did not occur. Of the pied, or Yarrell's wagtail, the habits in an alpine country are very similar to those of the grey species, but where the country becomes more densely peopled the manners are accommodated to circumstances, and the nest, though generally placed in the vicinity of water, is often built in the midst of a manufactory, and without apparent interruption from the noise and constant moving about of the workmen.

THE WHEATEAR.—Letter XIII., *page* 52.

The Wheatear extends from the Land's-End to Cape Wrath and the Hebrides, but in many districts it is gradually giving way to enclosures and plantations. It extends far northward, and is sometimes driven a long way out of its courses. One of these little birds was observed flying round the ship in Felix Harbour, on the 2nd of May, 1830, but was found dead the next morning, having arrived before the ground was sufficiently uncovered to enable it to procure its food.—(Ross, Append. to Second Voyage.) It has been once or twice killed in the island of Bermuda, by Lieut. Wedderburn, of the 42d Regiment, a locality far out of its track.

A most interesting Fauna might be written of the visitors to ships at sea, not only in the European seas, but even in the passages between Great Britain and Ireland, and from London or the south to the north of Scotland. If the observations were made in the spring and fall, with proper attention, some interesting migratory information would follow. The wheatear is a very common visitant at these seasons, sometimes remaining twenty-four hours on board.

RESPIRATORY ORGANS.—Letter XIV., *page* 55, *text and note.*

From the accounts of all, including Professor Owen, the *puncta lacrymalia* do not seem at all connected with the respiratory functions; and in a work like the present, which is likely to obtain a wide circulation, the opinion should not be allowed to go abroad as a fact. There is no connexion between the organs of respiration and these slits, and they are evidently the orifices of glands intended for some purpose or economy which apparently has not yet been resolved. Both Mr. Bennet and Professor Owen incline to the opinion that they are of sexual use and development.

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THE ROOK.—Letter XV., *page* 60.

The common rook, (*corvus frugilegus*,) seems to be more subject to a white variation than its other British congeners. Species entirely white are not often seen, but individuals, with parts of the wings and tail pure white, occur in almost every rookery. A pair of magpies entirely of a cream colour were hatched at a farm-steading in Eskdale, Dumfriesshire, and being much thought of by the tenant, were strictly preserved, and continued near the spot for many years.

STONE CURLEW.—Letter XVI., *page* 61.

Mr. White's remarks, *passim*, in his Correspondence in regard to this species are very interesting, and it was evidently a favourite with him. Has it been driven from its haunts, or does it still frequent the locality? It is by this group that we trace the alliance of the bustards. Mr. Yarrell does not trace it beyond Yorkshire. We have no record of its being killed in Scotland. Mr. Thompson notes it as a rare visitant to Ireland. It ranges to the plains between the Black and Caspian Seas, Asia Minor and Madeira.

Mr. Herbert, in one of his notes inserted in Bennet's edition, refers to a curious circumstance, that in his observations the bird is never found to breed except on "the chalk;" this will, however, require confirmation.

NUTHATCH.—Letter XVI., *page* 65, *note*.

In this note I stated that our common species is the only one inhabiting Europe. In the latest European ornithology, by M. Degland, *Sitta uralensis* is given as an occasional visitant: another, *Sitta syriaca*, more frequently occurs, and is common also in Greece and Syria. According to the authority quoted, it is also found in Dalmatia, the Levant, and Syria, and I have lately received a specimen from my son, of H.M.S. Caledonia, shot when the fleet was in the vicinity of Athens. The species of this group from Alpine India amount to five or six, and are remarkable in the alliance of form and colour to those of Europe.

TOADS.—Letter XVII., *page* 67, *text and note* †.

To this note we would only add, that toads deposit their spawn, or ova, in long strings, instead of in a mass as the common frog does; and the beautiful spotted chains that are often seen in pools in spring, as if looped over each other, is their ova newly deposited. The "venom of toads" has been discarded as a fable; still, the excretion from the skin possesses some properties, perhaps fitted for protection. We possessed a large Labrador dog, very fond of carrying anything, dead or alive, which took a fancy to seek out toads from among the strawberry beds. When taken in his mouth, the secretion of saliva was immediately increased, and his jaws became covered with foam; he evidently felt pain and annoyance, at the same time would not discontinue his practice of carrying them. Mr. Herbert, in a note to Bennet's edition, *page* 323, says:—"If a hungry pike seizes one, (a toad,) he disgorges



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it again in disgust, though he eats a frog greedily." What is the cause of disgust?—the same acrid secretion. We have kept several toads in the stove upon the tan pits, to catch insects. They have become quite tame, and will come to watch at the edge of a flower pot, until it is lifted, darting instantaneously with the tongue upon anything exhibiting motion that is under it.

THE SANDPIPER.—Letter XX., *page* 77, *text and notes.*

We stated in our "British Birds"—"Although this species extends to the northernmost parts of the main land of Scotland, it does not appear to visit the islands." We, however, find it mentioned in Mr. Heddle's Birds of Orkneys, as visiting Hoy and Sanday; Iceland, Greenland and Faroe Islands are given by Mr. Yarrell, and southward, India and its islands, Japan, Southern Africa; in America it is represented by *T. macularius*, or spotted sandpiper, so similar in its young plumage, that the geographical distribution has on this account been confounded.

EAGLE OWL.—Letter XXVIII., *page* 103, *text and note.*

Montague stated that the eagle owl had been killed in Yorkshire, Sussex and Kent. Mr. Selby records a specimen killed on the muirs in the county of Durham. In Ireland, a single record is given by Mr. Thompson, on authority of Mr. Stuart, that a pair bred on Tory Island, on the coast of Donegal.

PARASITIC HATCHING OF EGGS.—Letter XXX., *page* 107, *text and note, and* XXXIII., *page* 114, *text and note.*

There is no economical habit more remarkable in ornithology, than that of the parasitic hatching of eggs, which first was thought to be confined to the common cuckoo of Europe; but more extensive researches discovered that it was common to various genera of the cuckoos, and that members of a few other groups also pursued the same instinct. Various causes have been assigned for this anomalous habit, but without sufficient reason; and researches and comparisons in the structure of the parasitic species are still wanting, and would, without doubt, repay the inquirer. A large black species of Indian cuckoo, *Eudynamys orientalis*, invariably deposits its eggs in the nests of crows; and it is suspected that, in this instance, the cuckoo sometimes destroys the eggs of the crow, its eggs being frequently found alone. The young crows are also expelled. It is a very remarkable instance of design in the case of this bird, that, except in size, (the cuckoo's egg being slightly smaller,) the colour and markings are similar to those of the crow. (See Contributions to Ornithology for 1850, page 71.)

HEDGEHOGS.—Letter XXXI., *page* 109.

In our previous note we mentioned the eating of eggs by hedgehogs. There is no doubt of the fact, and that therefore they are obnoxious to gamekeepers. They are also so from another cause; they emit a very strong scent, and on the grassy muirs, those most favourable for

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black game, pointers will set them, if in the way, and stand very steadily. We have frequently witnessed disappointment from this cause. The ordinary and general food is insectivorous or moluscous; when observed in the evening, they are rooting through the herbage like little pigs, every now and then picking out something which is not vegetable; and although animal food, such as dead animals, eggs, and the young of various animals and birds, may be seized and fed upon when met with, it is not their ordinary, or sought for food. There is a curious note in the Zoological Journal, supplied by Professor Buckland, on the food of Hedgehogs, who, suspecting that hedgehogs eat snakes, tried the experiment, which proved his suspicion to be correct. He had been experimenting upon different kinds of food, and concludes, "Here we have evidence that the hedgehog feeds on roots, fruits, insects, and *snakes;* in fact, that it is an omnivorous animal."

SOFT-BILLED BIRDS.—Letter XXXVI., *page* 120, *note.*

The observation in this note is quite correct; there are many members of the family *muscicapidæ* in America, though none of the Old-World form of *fly-catchers;* and the Old-World form of Sylvia, or warblers, of White, is taken up by the *Sylvicolinæ* of the American forests. In America, again, we have no true *motacillæ;* but in Guinea, and West Africa, we have both a *motacilla* and numerous species of *drymoica*, &c. In this latter country, nevertheless, the *ploceinæ*, or weaver forms, are very abundant, and being mostly of somewhat gay colours, would, as Mr. White observes, form the bulk of the collection.

THE SWALLOW.—Letter XXXIX., *page* 128.

The original letter concludes:—"I am pleased to see that your (Pennant's) description of the moose corresponds so well with mine." The swallow was *H. rupestris*, a species found, according to Degland, besides France and Switzerland, also in Sicily, Sardinia, North of Africa, and Eastern Asia.

THE FLY.—Letter XLIII., *page* 140, *note.*

There is no doubt that both the species might come under White's observation, though we have, in our former note, stated that it "probably" was *H. nemorum.* These small coleopterous insects are widely distributed, and common almost every year; but it is chiefly when the young plant is weak from want of proper manure, or great drought, that it is very injurious. This insect has got the name of "the fly," and is the one commonly known by that appellation. But by far the most destructive insect is the larva of a tenthredinous, or saw-fly, allied to the "gooseberry caterpillar," which appears at intervals, without apparent cause, disappearing as unexplainably, and sweeping whole fields, even after they have obtained considerable size, with a locust rapidity. It has been made out to be the larva of *athalia centifoliæ*, and is well described by Mr. Yarrell, and more lately by Mr. Curtis in the

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Journal of the Agricultural Society of England. It has only come once under our own observation, disappearing, except in very limited numbers, the year following.

JARDINE HALL.—Letter LII., *page* 157, *note.*

This note refers to the old mansion-house of Jardine-hall, pulled down about 1812.

BANK-SWALLOW.—Letter LVII., *page* 175, *text.*

Our observation in Scotland and the North of England has always noted the *H. riparia*, or bank-swallow, to be the first in arriving.

IRISH FAUNA.—Letter LXIV., *page* 201, *note.*

I forget the authority on which this note regarding *Ledum palustre* and *Papaver nudicale* was inserted. Neither are given in either Mackay's "Flora Hibernica" or in Babington's Manual; and, on writing to Mr. Mackay for information, he states that Sir Charles Giesecké had been mistaken in the plants—having seen only an imperfect specimen of *Andromeda polifolia* in a hut in Ennis, while the *P. cambricum* was found both by Mr. Mackay and Dr. Graham in the habitat given for the latter.

White's hopes have been fulfilled, and we have now a host of naturalists working out the natural history of Ireland, among whom William Thompson has long taken the lead, and in his valuable zoological papers in the annals of natural history has worked out, minutely and successfully, many of the departments. These have again assumed the form of a regular Irish Fauna in the work alluded to by the Editor. The third volume, the completion of the Birds, being finished. For the Botany, Mr. Mackay has given us a complete Flora.

FOSTER-DAMS.—Letter LXXVI., *page* 223, *text and notes.*

In White's observation we have the account of a cat having suckled young squirrels. In the "Zoological Journal," Mr. Broderip relates that he saw a cat give suck to seven young *rats*. In these cases the animal does not seem to be able to discriminate; and we would be almost tempted to consider that it is the relief alone to be afforded that allows the intrusion of almost any young animal. In the case of a cow, or ewe, on the contrary, it is with extreme difficulty that a strange calf or lamb can be substituted for the real offspring; and the common practice among shepherds, in the case of a dead lamb, is to apply the skin around the stranger before introduction, smell being apparently the guide to recognition or detection.

THE VULTURE.—Letter LXXXVI., *page* 243, *notes.*

Vultur (*cathartes*) Aura is an American species, not found in Africa. The superstition mentioned in the note continues, but there seems no foundation for it.

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HONEY-BUZZARD.—Letter XCIII., *page* 265.

An interesting account of the capture of a specimen of this rare bird is given by Mr. Selby in the "Transactions" of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club: it had attacked a ground wasp's nest, and had scratched out the comb, with which, as a bait, it was afterwards trapped.

DOGS.—Letter CII.. *page* 284, *note* *.

See also Colonel Hamilton Smith, article, "Dog," in Griffith's Cuvier, and the same gentleman's "Dogs" in "Naturalist's Library."

THE PORTUGAL LAUREL.—Letter CVII., *page* 296, *note.*

We have never known the Portugal laurel cut by severe frost, even when accompanied with a gale. During the last thirty years, plants of from three or four years of age to thirty have been several times subjected to a cold at and below 0°, and to frosts of long duration. They have invariably stood well, and with the common rhododendron, are among our most valuable evergreens. Dryness or moisture of the climate or situation may have an influence.

END OF SIR WM. JARDINE'S NOTES.

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# SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES,

BY OR COMMUNICATED TO THE EDITOR.

HYBERNATION OF SWALLOWS, *page* 37 *et passim.*

Mr. White evidently experienced great pleasure at sight of the first swallow in spring. Indeed every lover of nature must do so. As for myself, I love the swallow and its congeners, and would (supposing I had the choice) give up any other bird we have rather than this. Independent of its wonderful intelligence, its plumage, as will be found on minute inspection, is very beautiful; its song interesting and melodious; its form graceful; and its utility in clearing the air of insects beyond, perhaps, any estimate we can form. And then who can witness the building of a martin's nest, and hear the notes of exulting satisfaction which the loving little artists utter reciprocally as the work progresses, without entering into Mr. White's feelings!

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When we consider that swallows have been seen in this country every month in the year, with the exception perhaps of January, it is not to be wondered at that Mr. White and some other naturalists should have clung to the idea of their remaining in a state of torpidity during a portion of the year, instead of migrating. They have been found in December merrily hawking for flies round the tower of Windsor Castle, and again on a mild day in February. These facts may well puzzle naturalists. The grand flight of the main body of these birds, it is well known, takes place towards the end of October, and many smaller flights of six or seven soon afterwards, and lastly the stragglers. Except on the supposition of some partial hybernation, it is difficult to account for these birds being occasionally seen in the cold months of December and February. In illustration of this, a most observant naturalist writes me, that some years since, on the 28th of December, he went on horseback from Rochester to Arundel. The ground was then covered with snow, and so severe a frost set in, that he was obliged to leave his horse and proceeded on foot. On arriving at Arundel, several persons were in front of the coach-office, looking at a couple of martins playing in the sun, which then shone brightly. He left them so engaged, after watching them for about half an hour, during which time the birds often rested themselves by clinging to the wall immediately under the eaves of an old building nearly opposite, probably the place of their retreat and shelter.—ED.

THE NUTHATCH, *pages* 65 *and* 278.

The nuthatch hides nuts as crows do acorns. Magpies, ravens, and other such birds, among many other things, are prone to hide food which they cannot consume at the time. Acorns are thus hidden in the ground, and by such means the growth of oaks would necessarily be much extended were it not for the operations of agriculture. Those who have lived in wooded districts, as in Kent, can hardly have failed to observe how seedling oaks will spring up on arable land, even under circumstances which forbid the supposition that they could have found their way there by any other means. It has not, however, been duly ascertained whether birds who so hide superfluous food remember their "cache," and return to it again; or whether the hiding is an act of blind instinct, implanted in them for an eternal purpose. The nuthatch is a hider of food in the same way; for, sitting on one occasion near a window on the ground-floor, which looked into the garden bordered by an extensive shrubbery, I saw a nuthatch fly close under the window, with a hazel-nut in his bill, on which he proceeded to operate in the usual manner. I saw him endeavour to fix it in several crevices upon the dry ground where it was hard and he could obtain a purchase; but after inflicting upon it many and most vigorous and violent stabs, he was evidently fain to give it up as a hopeless case. He once more took it up, flew with it a yard or two, then alighted, and pushed it by main force into a hole in the ground near the area wall, after which he caught up two or three stray pieces of moss with which he covered it completely, and flew away. Being ill at the time, I could not examine the place until

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after some days ; and when I did examine it, the nut was gone, but I am unable to say whether it was removed by the bird or not. I could not be mistaken in the accuracy of my observations of the process of this hiding, because I was sitting close to the window, watching the bird uninterruptedly, within two yards of it when he buried the nut.—R. C. NORMAN.

### FROGS, *page* 70.

Frogs are said not to croak unless under circumstances when it would appear that they croaked from motives of pleasure ; but experience *seems* to negative this notion. I lived in a house in the country, which was surrounded by a deep area; and every spring, when the frogs began to wake up and move towards water (which they may then be observed to do instinctively), the bottom of the area was constantly covered with frogs (and a few toads), that would seem to have encountered the area in their passage. Their numbers were so great, and the area so deep and difficult of ingress and egress, that the daily removal of them, on the score of humanity, became at length too serious a task, and a man was sent down at intervals to collect them, which he did by sweeping them bodily into a corner, and then shovelling them, pell-mell, into a basket. Those who are inured to physical hardships, become hardy ; a hardy body is comparatively insensible, and an insensible body will naturally have a congenial mind. The frogs were then thrown over the garden-wall into some rough ground, where there was a pond, towards which they were no doubt proceeding in such numbers when they fell into my area. I often heard these frogs croak when imprisoned in the area, and observed that many of them looked miserably thin, weak, and dry. On one occasion, when I had collected a basket-full—in the first days of this plague of frogs—and was throwing them, one by one, over the wall, a half-starved wretch erected himself at the bottom of the basket, and, like a ghastly phantom, croaked horribly at me, as if in reproach. In croaking, his throat was distended in a line down the middle of it, like that of a bird when he sings. That frogs are enabled to know when water is near, and that they are instinctively attracted towards it, I have had abundant means of certifying in localities where there was a pond on the other side of a paling or a wall. I have found frogs during the spawning season in numbers close against the impeding fence, with their heads towards it ; and when I threw them over, they immediately proceeded in the direction of the water. On one occasion I watched them as they approached the edge of the pond, and was highly amused to see the vigour of the final somerset they took from the bank, and how they stretched their limbs on the soft watery couch, and seemed to rejoice in the accomplishment of their arduous pilgrimage.—R. C. N.

### TOADS—BEE-CATCHING, *page* 70.

I have seen an old toad come forth in the evening, and place himself in front of a bee-stand, where he would watch until a weary bee, heavily laden, missed his footing on the board above, and fell upon the ground;

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and if it thus fell within reach of the toad, he sat still; if not, he hopped spasmodically towards him until he came within reach of the bee, which was at a distance from it about two inches. Then, after looking at it with much gravity, he opened his great jaws, and protruded a long tongue, with which he caught up the bee, and, drawing it in again, instantly closed them on his victim, which he swallowed at once, but with evident difficulty, for he could only accomplish it after several gulps, like a dog who tries to swallow a dry substance. The toad then resumed his position, and "looked out," like Dampier's booby, "for another prize." I conclude that the end of the tongue of a toad is viscous, or glutinous, and that the prey adheres to it, as in the case of other insectivorous reptiles; but I do not happen to have ascertained the fact by inspection. —R. C. N.

### The Snake under Water, *page* 73.

I was walking by the side of a very small brook with one of my sons, when my attention was caught by the motion of a common snake (*natrix torquata*), which I saw distinctly at the bottom of the water, behaving as I have said. After a while I took him out with my hand, catching him easily, indeed so easily that I am led to doubt whether he saw me, and, therefore, whether he could see well under water. I then carried him to a bare place in the part of the field near the brook, and put him on the grass; here, being ignorant, I suppose, of local bearing, instead of proceeding to effect his escape by gliding away, he immediately proceeded to coil himself into a ball, continually turning and involving the folds of his body so as to protect his head, which he hid as carefully as he could in the midst of the folds. He also emitted freely the characteristic effluvia of his species when made angry or alarmed. After a while he changed his tactics, elevated his head, looked very fierce, and hissing violently, darted out his forked tongue; also, when I put my foot near him, he *struck at my shoe like a viper*, and that several times, not only going through the motion of striking, but *hitting my shoe so hard a blow with his head* as to be distinctly audible. I have lived among snakes of the same species for many years, but never saw any *C. natrix* behave like him.—R. C. N.

### Woodcocks, *page* 133.

In the preserves of Lord Abercorn, on the borders of Hertfordshire, the keepers found a woodcock's nest, on which the old bird sat very close, and allowed a very near approach without moving. In order to save the young ones, they determined to take effectual precautions to hinder them from escaping, and, therefore, before the eggs were hatched, they surrounded the spot at a sufficient distance with close hurdles, the interstices in which they were careful to fill with heath. The woodcock continued to set, and was visited constantly, several times in a day, until one morning when she was gone, and the nest was found to be quite empty. The ground within the enclosure was then examined rigidly, first by the men alone, and finally with dogs, but no young woodcock

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could anywhere be found, and the old birds were seen no more. It was asserted by my informant, who had it from one of the keepers, that woodcocks will take up their young singly in their feet, and fly away with them ; and that he had seen a woodcock so flying, and he attributed the above disappearance of the young birds to the parents thus instinctively removing them from apprehended danger.—R. C. N.

### Affection of Animals, *page* 223.

The ardent affection of animals for their young lasts in general only till they are able to cater for themselves. When the purposes of nature are fulfilled the tie is dissolved, and neither parent nor offspring appear to recognise each other. There are, however, remarkable exceptions on record, to which the following instance may be added :—A gentleman in Scotland had a cock golden pheasant, which he placed in a pen with a solitary chicken. These birds formed a strong attachment for each other, which was shown in a variety of ways. The pheasant died, and was stuffed. The chicken was turned loose, but appeared miserable after the death of its companion; and, on being shown it in its stuffed state, drooped its wings, and, after vainly striving to get at it, fixed its eyes on it earnestly, and in this attitude died.—Ed.

### Mucilaginous Seeds,—Why do they not readily germinate? *page* 352.

The seeds of ivy are not in general found to grow well, however carefully planted ; while that which is self-sown, or sown by birds, under trees and walls, will grow abundantly ; from which fact it has been supposed that such mucilaginous seeds require to be passed through some digestive process to render them fruitful. This would not at first seem to be a well-founded conclusion, since yew-berries and quince-seeds are as mucilaginous as any of them, and yet grow freely ; not to speak of the common cress, which, when it is held in the mouth, becomes more thickly coated with mucilage than the quince itself. The fact, nevertheless, is certainly true that ivy grows "naturally" at the foot of trees, the stems of which are its natural supports. Hollies are also commonly found growing under trees. There is a wood near Newbury, where several hollies grow under every forest tree ; indeed it may more properly be called a holly forest. It appears to me that the true inference to be drawn from the circumstance of the ready germination of ivy and holly under forest trees, is that the seeds require an unusual supply of air as well as moisture, which cannot both be procured in situations that are exposed to sun and wind. It would be well to test the value of this surmise, by dropping the berries of ivy and holly when they are as nearly as possible in the state in which they are eaten by the birds, at the foot of the trees, and about their roots, where ivy and holly are seen to abound, and shake down the seeds until they are tolerably covered by the mossy vegetation which is commonly found in such situations, but put no earth over them, and then await the result.—R. C. N.

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